

*Preaching Christ
Crucified*

REV. CHARLES E. O'NEILE

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Preaching Christ Crucified

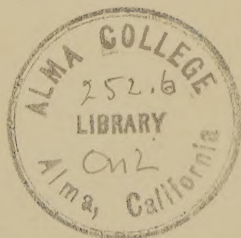
"We preach Christ Crucified."
(1 Cor. i. 23)

SERMONS FOR LENT

By

CHARLES E. O'NEILE

Rector Church of Most Holy Redeemer
San Francisco, California



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PREACHING CHRIST CRUCIFIED

ASH WEDNESDAY

THE FAST OF LENT

THE penitential season upon which you enter to-day, unites you in a particular manner with the universal Church in praising God, in rendering Him more propitious and in consequence drawing down upon yourselves, and upon those for whom you especially pray, blessings which it would be presumptuous for you to expect at any other period during the ecclesiastical year. Lent may, therefore, above all other seasons be regarded as your spiritual harvest time, and should be welcomed as such by all of you. The amount to be reaped by you will be proportioned to the activity and fervor with which you perform the duties which Holy Church imposes on you. Of these duties the most important in Fasting. The pages of Sacred Scripture place beyond all doubt our belief that fasting endured with proper dispositions, that is, when accompanied by fervent prayer and deep sorrow for sin, is the most meritorious of all human acts. Let us give this important duty our consideration for a few minutes this morning.

It is clear, my brethren, from the pages of the Old Testament, that the practice of fasting was commonly observed by the Chosen People, as being pleasing to God and meritorious for themselves. God Himself had made these truths to them. By His command, the Day of Atonement was set

aside each year by the Jews for a solemn fast in expiation for their sins. The Prophet Zacharias (Zach. xiii. 19) mentions three other annual fast days of the fourth, fifth and tenth months, all divinely established. The later synagogue added two more general fast days every week, on Mondays and Thursdays, in remembrance of the profanation and destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

Other fasts, besides those to be observed by divine command each year, are mentioned in the sacred pages. On one occasion when the Jews, after having rebelled against their Maker's law, repented of their sin and begged God's pardon for it, He instructed the Prophet Joel to make known to them the conditions on which the pardon asked for would be granted. It was not sufficient that they had forsaken sin; that they were grieved because of the offense they had offered the Divine Majesty,—they must besides do penance by fasting, before they would be again received into God's favor. "Be converted to Me with all your heart in fasting, and in weeping and in mourning" (Joel ii. 12). The Ninevites by their filthy abominations had provoked heaven, and Divine vengeance was about to fall upon them, when at the preaching of the Prophet Jonas, they renounced their evil practices, observed a solemn fast of three days and so pleased the Almighty thereby that He revoked the decree of extermination which He had pronounced against them. The impious King Achab, a murderer and a persecutor of the prophets, when warned by Elias of the awful punishment which surely awaited him unless he repented of his sins, covered himself with sackcloth, gave himself up to prayer and fasting and thereby stayed the avenging hand of God that was about to fall upon his house (3 Kings xxi. 27).

We learn from the pages of the Old Testament that it was customary for the Jews to have recourse to fasting

whilst imploring God's aid, especially in times of danger, trial, or when seeking some particular favor from on high. Daniel the Prophet (Dan. ix. 3) tells us that when seeking "mercy and forgiveness" for his countrymen, he set his face to the Lord to pray and make supplication with fasting, whilst covered with sackcloth and ashes. Moses (Deut. ix. 9) prepared himself by a forty days' fast to receive the commandments of the Lord on Mt. Sinai. After this event he again fasted forty days (Deut. ix. 18) to avert the destruction which threatened his people because of their sins. Josaphat (2 Par. xx. 3) ordered a general fast to obtain aid from heaven against the armies swarming out of Syria and determined on subduing and enslaving his people. Nehemias (2 Esdras i. 4) learning of the meserable state of the Palestine Jews, fasted, and prayed that God might send them relief. "I fasted and prayed before the face of the God of heaven." The Prophet Elias fasted forty days and nights, that heaven might protect his people from their enemies. The angel Raphael declared to Tobias: "Prayer is good with fasting and alms more than to lay up treasures of gold" (Tobias xii. 8). Judith fasted all the days of her life, except the sabbaths and new moons, and the feasts of the house of Israel (Judith viii. 6).

When an immense Assyrian army was getting ready to attack Bethulia, the high priest Eliachim encouraged the people: "Known ye that the Lord will hear your prayers, if you continue with perseverance in your fastings and prayers in the sight of the Lord" (Judith iv. 11). David, (2 Kings xii. 16) whilst the life of his young son hung trembling in the balance, spent his time in fasting. Queen Esther (Esther xiv. 2) "Humbled her body with fasts," that God might forgive the Jews their forgetfulness of Him. King David, because of his sins, never interrupted his austerities to his dying hour. He submitted to the pub-

lic humiliation of laying aside the royal purple to clothe himself in penitential weeds, though he knew the finger of derision would be pointed at him from every quarter of a licentious court. He declares that his knees were weakened by fasting; that his body had become as withered grass because of his austerities and that when all around were sunk in repose, his sleepless eyes, awake to the enormity of his guilt, were bathing his couch with floods of penitential tears.

No doubt the motive which prompted the fasting of many of those mentioned in the pages of the Old Testament, was the conviction that such austerity would strengthen them against temptation from within and enable them to sanctify and save their souls. They realized as we do that "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21). They were conscious that they carried about within them the seed of every vicious passion; that they must live in a state of perpetual struggle against the seditious inclinations of a nature which make of life, in the words of holy Job (Job vii. 1), "a warfare." These passions which are constantly assaulting creatures are called in Holy Scripture the flesh, and are always spoken of as a source of temptation. The inspired writers state time and again, in unmistakable language, that there is an inclination to evil not imaginary and metaphysical, but real and active, in the flesh with which we are born. Because of this inclination, some in early times, fell into the erroneous teaching that there are two First Causes,—one the author of good, the other, the author of evil. They believed matter, the flesh, to be unmixed evil and rather than ascribe its origin to God, they supposed it to have had its beginning from some other being.

In recoil from this error, some in our day have gone to the opposite extreme of treating the flesh as if it is not

the subject of evil at all; as if sin lies only in our spiritual nature. From this principle they are led to deny that the practice of fasting exercises a purifying and sanctifying influence on our souls. Such an opinion betrays a shallow knowledge of human nature. No one can reflect without perceiving the relation which exists between the habits of the body and the condition of the mind, between the workings of the flesh and the feelings of the soul. It is manifest that sins of anger, pride, hardness of heart, indolence, sloth, selfishness are so closely related to the body, that it is hard to say where they chiefly dwell, whether in the spirit or in the flesh. Does not the universal language of mankind connect them together? Does not the natural instinct of discerning the characters of men by outward tokens prove that, whether we will or not, we do associate the bodily and mental habits of men together? Does not a free, a soft, a licentious course of life, insensibly effect the whole character? And what do all these things prove, but that the body, or as Holy Scripture says, the flesh, is the occasion, the avenue, the provoking, aggravating, sustaining cause of moral and spiritual evil in the soul. It follows then that an external self-discipline, such as fasting, must promote our sanctification; that as the obstructions to purity of heart arise chiefly out of sensuality or indulgence of the affections and motions of the flesh, so a system which destroys or weakens these excitements or counteracts their effects must tend to render the soul freer for its purely spiritual exercises. Experience and history prove such to be the case.

From the references I have made to the pages of the Old Testament it is indisputable that fasting was practiced amongst the Jews with God's approval up to the coming of our Savior. The New Testament shows that not only did Jesus not forbid it as displeasing to His Heavenly

Father, but on the contrary that He sanctioned it. In His Sermon on the Mount He assumes, without a direct command, that His disciples will fast; adds directions as to the manner of their fasting, and promises a reward for doing so. On another occasion, in an answer given to the captious question about the difference between His disciples and those of John the Baptist, He replied that His disciples had not yet been taught, formed, disciplined, but that the days were coming when fasting would be one of the direct precepts which they would be called upon to observe (Matt. ix. 15). We know that such has been the case. We read of the Apostles after Christ's ascension, "ministering to the Lord and fasting" (Acts xiii. 2). We read that Paul and Barnabas "prayed with fasting" (Acts xiv. 22). In one of his letters (2 Cor. xi. 27) St. Paul tells his converts that he fasted much. At another time he wrote them: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection lest perhaps when I have preached to others I myself should become a cast-away" (1 Cor. ix. 27). This holy Apostle whose body was fatigued by many trying missions, whose mind dwelt in visions and ecstasies, did not consider the dignity of his office, his arduous labors for Christ's Church, or the mysterious assurance which he had heard in heaven, a sufficient security for his eternal salvation without the holy exercise of mortification.

It is, my brethren, of infinitely greater importance to us that the Savior of the world, as we are reminded at this holy season, retired into the desert and fasted for forty days. Were there no precept for fasting in God's holy law, this prominent act of our Model would be sufficient. We must conclude from it that there are virtues and an efficacy in the discipline of fasting; that by His example our Blessed Lord has in the most emphatic way prescribed this duty for all who desire to advance in Christian perfection. Such

is the significance of the Lenten season which we begin to-day. In entering upon this time of penance, it should be for you a source of encouragement to remember that your prayers, fasts, almsdeeds and attendance at Lenten devotions receive additional worth from the fact that this holy season is observed simultaneously throughout the world; that whole nations bow their heads and humble their souls in unison before God of heaven.

And besides, my brethren, what peculiar fruits may we not expect from the observance of a practice which bears so high and noble an origin, having been preserved for us with all that is venerable and sacred in religious antiquity. While the fasts that occur now and then during the year have been left to the discretion of the Church in each age, that of Lent boasts of the sanction of the Apostles and the example of Christ Himself. It is thus under the special patronage and favor of God. By it we are connected with the founders and earliest lights of our faith. It is the continuation from age to age of a mighty appeal for mercy in which all the martyred champions of Christianity, all the zealous Apostles of Christ, all the holy pastors of the flock, and all the myriads of the devoted faithful have in their day joined and transmitted to their successors, to be kept up with unceasing fervor. If any prayer can wring mercy from the Almighty, if heaven is to be borne away by violence and perseverance, surely it must be by the combined assault of the Catholic world continued without interruption through the ages.

There are then, my brethren, many motives why you should enter upon this holy Lenten season in earnest. Not the least important of these motives should be a desire to do something in atonement for your sinful past. Every page of God's holy law insists on the sinner doing penance for his sins. It is probably true that most of you have at

times in the past grievously offended your heavenly Father. It is probably no less true that you have done little or nothing to make Him reparation. Had you lived in the early ages of Christianity, you would have found discipline far stricter than it is to-day. Not only was the primitive Church more exacting in her dealings with those who applied to her for baptism, and refused to admit them into her fold until they had given indubitable proof of their worthiness, but she was even more careful that they who had enjoyed the gracious privileges of Christians and had stained the purity of their first innocence by grievous public sin, should not be again admitted to full fellowship with those who had remained faithful, until after having undergone a most severe penance. We know from the records of those early times that sinners were often required to prostrate themselves on the ground outside the Church door, not being allowed to enter God's House, or to be present at the Most Holy Sacrifice; that they were clothed in sackcloth and covered with ashes,—proclaiming to all that they were doing penance for their sins. Whenever the faithful were assembled for public worship these penitents were on hand, garbed in their penitential robes and begging the prayers of those who were about to take part in the celebration of the most august mysteries of religion. This period of penance was not of short duration. It often lasted for years: occasionally for a lifetime.

What a difference there is my friends between the Catholics who come beneath our notice and those Christians of the first centuries who gladly submitted to such rigorous requirements of the early Church, actually considering themselves as favored beyond all measure in being privileged to enter upon the severe course of penance prescribed by her, since it would bring about their reunion with the faithful of Christ. Although in our day members of God's

Church transgress the Divine law far more frequently and far more grievously than did the first converts to Christ, they give no indication that they appreciate the heinousness of sin, its eternal consequence or the awful Majesty of Heaven's King to Whom they have given offense. After having most flagrantly offended Almighty God and this times without number, they seek reconciliation on the easiest terms possible. After performing the trivial works of satisfaction enjoined in the tribunal of penance, they acquit themselves of any further obligation of satisfying God for the injury their sins had done Him. They enjoy as usual their pleasures; they avoid as usual whatever is painful to self-love or to the senses and what is worse, the very fasts commanded by the Church, relaxed though they be to almost nothing, they consider an intolerable burden and nuisance. A life of such complexion at the beginning of the Church, far from meriting for one the name of Penitent, would not have entitled him to the name of Christian.

It is true my brethren, that the Church has commuted the penances demanded by her code of the earlier centuries to lighter practices of prayer, almsgiving and other meritorious works. The declining fervor of her children, the persecutions of the Roman emperors and the difficulty of enforcing the rigid requirements of the original disciplinary law upon growing numbers, made this change necessary. This change, however, bear in mind, is only in the external polity of the Church; the spirit of her laws, like the eternal law of God, is fixed and immutable. There are not two gospels, one for the Primitive Christians, another for us. The road to heaven, for them, was not different from that over which you and I must travel. Sins committed in our day are not less odious to Immaculate Sanctity than they were in former ages. The obligation of doing penance to satisfy the justice of God is imposed on us as it was im-

posed on the first Christians; it is inseparable from the gospel of Christ; it is appointed for all times and places. Relaxation of morals, far from doing away with its necessity, rather renders the observance of penance more indispensable.

Of course, my brethren, you all know that no penitential act which you may perform is of itself adequate to repair the injury sin does to God. Only the Eternal Son can satisfy for sin and restore to His Father the honor of which it robbed Him. Your satisfactory works are merely conditions which God in His wisdom has thought proper to appoint, and without which He will not impart to you the fruits of your Savior's Passion. This application of Christ's merits to your deeds is a favor which the Creator is free to bestow under whatever restrictions or limitations He deems expedient. It is not for you to examine into His motives, but to embrace with gratitude the terms He offers and to perform with scrupulous exactness the duties He demands of you. Others whose lives you admire and regard as models of what your own lives should be—God's favored ones, His saints in every age, His prophets, patriarchs and apostles, yea and your Mediator Himself—have been noted for their fasts and mortifications. You, my brethren, cannot neglect these duties as a carnal and unprofitable service. You cannot despise those sacred weapons with which God's blessed ones conquered.

Let me then, my brethren, in conclusion, beg each one of you to enter upon this holy season of Lent with a firm determination to do all he can in propitiating the offended Creator; rendering Him that satisfaction due from this sinful world, and meriting for himself and for those in whose welfare he is particularly concerned a share in those precious blessings which at this time especially our Heavenly Father dispenses with lavish hand. Those of you who cannot fast

because of old age, sickness or trying labor must make up for this inability by more plentiful alms, longer prayers, frequent visits to Jesus in the tabernacle, making the stations of the cross, and by avoiding all places of amusement during this period of penance. The discharge of these duties whilst costing you something, will bring countless blessings from Him Who has promised to reward even a cup of cold water given in His Name. In your dying hour when the years of your earthly pilgrimage will be drawing to a close, what a broad stream of glory will cross the dismal prospect when on looking backward you can see, year after year, the tenth part of each duly set aside and consecrated to expiating for the failings of the remainder and preparing for that blessed country where fasting and mortification will find no place.

“They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall rule them and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Apoc. vii. 16).

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST IN THE DESERT

"Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil."—*Matt. iv. 1.*

THAT He Who is Sanctity Itself, the All-Holy Son of God, should allow Himself to be tempted by the devil is the greatest mystery of our Christian faith. That He should experience a struggle with the powers of darkness, similar to those which are constantly taking place in our sinful hearts, appears to us a yet further depth in the mysterious economy of the Incarnation. We should have imagined our Savior to be so far above the reach of evil, so superior to human weakness, that what we experience in our daily lives, could have no place in Him: would in fact be derogatory to His transcendent sanctity, were not the words of Sacred Scripture so explicit as to admit of but one possible interpretation. The gospels tell us in the simplest language, that after our Divine Lord had been during forty days fasting, watching, and praying in the desert, and His Sacred Body was tortured by fierce pangs of hunger, the devil approached and tempted Him to sin. We are to make this incident in our Savior's life the subject of our study this morning. It has been recorded in the sacred pages, that it may be a source of instruction and encouragement to us. He Who is God, became our Brother, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and allowed Himself to be tempted to strengthen us against our spiritual enemies, and to show us how we are to meet the onslaughts of the evil one and of his emissaries.

There are many who question the reality of the struggle which the evangelists describe as having taken place in the wilderness between Jesus and satan. The words of the gospel, however, are so clear that they are susceptible of but one interpretation. It would make all scripture unreal were they to be so interpreted as to signify that about Our Lord's temptations there was nothing but an appearance of trial. It would cast a doubt over the whole life of Jesus were we to suppose that He only assumed the attitude and outward manner of a tempted man, without experiencing the sore cost at which humanity in its ordinary state wins its victories from the forces of hell. To suppose that temptation in Our Lord's case was merely an ideal economy passed through for a purpose,—to constitute a pattern for His followers to copy,—and not a law of His life, as truly chosen for Him in the nature He assumed, as for ourselves, would be wholly inconsistent with the simplicity of the gospel. To deny that in Him temptation was not so much a condition of perfection as it is for us; not so much a preparatory process through which His Humanity learned obedience, as in the case of any other child of Adam; not as much fraught with real effort and suffering, such as we all experience in our struggles against satan's efforts to cause us to sin, would be to revive under another form the ancient heresy of the Docetæ, which declared Our Lord's human nature to be a phantom shape, merely assumed for the purpose of embodying a manifestation of Himself in a passing transit on earth.

Whilst then we cannot question the reality of Our Lord's temptation, it would be blasphemy to hold that He could fall before the wiles of the evil one. Though He might be surrounded by the powers of darkness, He could never be subject to them. He could not be separated from God; He could not sin. There could not be within His pure hu-

manity, that inclination to evil, that predisposition to yield to temptation, which brings about so many of our falls. Every thought and word and deed of Christ was in perfect conformity to His Heavenly Father's law. He could challenge His enemies to point their finger at a single blot on His life: "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" (John viii. 46.) Others whose lives were associated with His were conscious of His holiness. St. Peter felt the great difference between a sinless and a sinful nature, when he poured forth that utterance of self-accusation: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v. 8). This same Apostle, who had been the constant companion of Christ, says of Him that He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter ii. 22). St. Paul asserts that Christ "knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21), and in the same breath refers to His temptation and to His sinlessness lest the one should be imperiled by the fact of the other. In his epistle to the Hebrews he describes Him as "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). St. John says: "In Him there is no sin" (1 John iii. 5). Even Pilate, Judas and the dying thief bore witness, in the presence of His persecutors, to the sinlessness of Christ.

It may seem strange to you, my brethren, that satan would be so foolish, or so wicked, as to tempt his God. It is supposed, in explanation of this difficulty, that the evil one was ignorant, or at least doubtful of the Personality of Jesus. Many spiritual writers are of the opinion that it was the revelation of the future mystery of the Incarnation, as it was unfolded to the angels at the time of their probation, claiming their allegiance and homage for their God in a nature inferior to their own, that caused the revolt of many of them, and their consequent banishment from heaven and condemnation to the flames of hell. The Incarnation, having been the occasion of satan's irremediable fall, became in

consequence, it is said, the peculiar object of his hatred. He had known and most carefully matched from the very beginning, every step in the plan of the Almighty to redeem fallen man. He had never forgotten the promise God had given the guilty pair in the garden, to send in the fulness of time one born of woman to crush his head. No creature understood as he, the significance of revelations made by the Almighty through His prophets, concerning the Redeemer to come. If Scribes and Priests at Jerusalem could tell Herod that the Savior, according to prophecy, would be born at Bethlehem; if they had calculated the seventy weeks of years of the Prophet Daniel, and knew that the time had arrived for the fulfillment of his prophecy; if they knew that the promised Savior of Israel was to be born of a virgin and of the house and lineage of David; if holy Simeon and devout Anna and other saintly souls were looking for the coming of the Redeemer, it is certain that all these particulars were known to satan and his angels.

There were many incidents connected with the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem which alarmed the evil one, as they seemed to be the fulfillment of prophecies made long years before concerning the Promised Savior. It appears, however, that satan was deceived because of the humility, meekness and poverty of our Divine Lord. During the thirty years of His life in Nazareth Jesus had worked no miracles, had assumed no authority, or public standing as a teacher. On the contrary, He had so withdrawn into the shade of a studied obscurity, and conformed Himself to the daily life of His associates, that no one apparently had suspected Him to be more than the humble villager He seemed to be. When, however, Jesus, about to begin the great work for which He had come into the world, was baptized by John in the Jordan, and the heavens opened and a voice from the clouds cried out: "This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am

well pleased" (Matt. xvii. 5) satan was alarmed and, with the hope of discovering Who this Man might be, he followed Christ into the desert and assaulted Him with every kind of temptation which was permitted him to use.

We gather from the words of the evangelists an intimation that Jesus was guided by an extraordinary and singular movement of the Holy Ghost to retire into the desert "to be tempted by the devil." He Who has taught us to pray that our Heavenly Father may not lead us into temptation, and Who has given us so many warnings about the avoidance of everything that may lead us into sin, may have wished us to understand that although temptations are inevitable, although we are not to be surprised at them or fear them, or even be over-sorry for them when they come to us unsought, yet we are not to seek them out, or to defy the devil and match our strength against his, unless it be under the special guidance of the Holy Ghost.

It seems too that the temptation of Christ by satan was necessary in the ordinary course of events to prove Him to be perfect man, endowed with reason and free will. It was not sufficient that He should be born as we are born; that He should live as we live, and speak our words, and think with our thoughts, and love with our affection. Nor was it sufficient that He suffer as we suffer and die as we die. To be perfect man He need not sin, but He must be tempted.

It was, moreover, becoming that as the first created man had yielded to the tempter, He Who had come to crush the serpent's head should submit to the same trial and win back victory for the human race. It seems that the Incarnation was impossible without a temptation; that Jesus could not come into the world without meeting the enemy who claimed the world as His own. It is not then surprising that there is an evident similarity between the temptation of the first

Adam in the garden, and that of the second Adam in the wilderness. The temptation of both was threefold, touching the sources of all the sins which have ever been or ever will be committed. These sources of sin are the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life.

The first of these is the rebellion of the lower appetites against the powers of reason and conscience which should naturally control them. The second is the illusion produced in our higher mental nature by outward things, viewed otherwise than in the light of God. The third source of sin is that interior deception, seated in the highest self-consciousness, by which man becomes to himself the center of regard, to which, instead of to God, all his proceedings in life are directed. When, to provoke the first of these,—the concupiscence of the flesh,—satan would avail himself of Our Lord's hunger to destroy His submission to His Father's will; when, to excite the second, he displays before His eyes the kingdoms of the world, with all their glory; when to inject the third, he would even wrest scripture to authorize spiritual arrogance and departure from the proper character of human obedience, he but repeats, with more elaborate contrivance, that which he comprised successfully in a single assault on our first parent.

Our Lord's defeat of satan was brought about through the energies of His human nature. The Son of God had come to gain as man, for man, a victory over sin and satan. In consequence, we find in the history of the temptation, no putting forth by Christ of the powers of the Godhead. Throughout the gospel record, prominence is given to the manhood of Christ, both as the subject of suffering, and as the power of resistance. Our Lord's answers to the tempter can be understood only under this view, that He was in His true, pure, manhood resisting satan by a per-

fect acceptance of the Divine will. "Not in bread alone doth man live" (Matt. iv. 4). "The Lord, thy God shalt thou adore and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. iv. 10). These words can apply only to the creature. It is created nature, in our Blessed Savior, rising up in its true dignity of perfect obedience to the will of God, that gained a victory in our name, and for us, over satan. As in His Manhood only our Savior died and rose again and then ascended to His glory, so in His Manhood only, He met and mastered the temptations of the evil one. Had Jesus vanquished the tempter by the putting forth of His divine power as the Son of God, there would have been no moral victory over satan. It was man who had been defeated in the garden of Eden; it must be man who reverses the defeat. Hence it happened that Jesus, the second Adam, took up man's battle in the wilderness, and fought his way to victory and to paradise. In the words of Cardinal Newman:

"O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.
O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail."

Gratitude for the consolation and instruction that Our Lord gives us and for the graces that He has earned for us in the mystery of His Temptation, should fill all our hearts. Try to picture Him in that savage desert. He has all our human feelings though He be God, blessed forever. The sun's rays beat violently upon His head by day, and the heat reflected from the rocks around and the sand beneath, scorches Him like a furnace. The rough blasts from the

mountains, the heavy dews and the damp drip of the cave in which He had taken up His abode, chill Him through by night. He is wasted by hunger, parched by thirst, sleepless and exhausted. Wild beasts, the scriptures tell us, roar around Him; evil spirits in a thousand hideous forms are about and attack Him on every side. What must have been the abhorrence of the All Holy One when demons were in His presence and spoke to Him? What must have been the recoil of Him in Whom all Holiness resides when touched by him who is the source of all evil.

These things we can faintly imagine, but we are powerless to conceive the torture caused His Sacred Heart in being tempted to sin. To creatures enlightened from on high with some sense of the Majesty of God and of the hideousness of sin, an evil thought has been worse than the rack. St. Stanislaus fainted away on hearing an indecent word. St. Francis Regis when a child became seriously ill when the enormity and malice of sin were explained to him. St. Francis Xavier, even in sleep, was in such agony at the mere suggestion of evil, that blood gushed from his veins. How painful must it have been to Spotless Purity to be tempted to sin; to be spoken to and touched and carried hither and thither by the very personification of all evil. It is impossible for us to measure the intense humiliation and spiritual anguish of such familiarity with the wicked one. None but God in Whose sight the heavens are not clear, can know the hatefulness of sin as it was manifested to Christ, or the depth of sorrow and abhorrence which satan's temptation excited in His unsullied soul.

We too, my brethren, must meet satan in conflict. We cannot live in the flesh and hope to escape his snares. He hates humanity which Jesus redeemed, and never abandons the idea of rendering fruitless the Precious Blood offered in behalf of sinners. Many amongst us who had been bap-

tized in the faith of Christ have fallen before the wiles of the wicked one. It has been so since the beginning. In the form of a serpent he worked upon Eve and caused her to sin, thereby bringing misery to the human family. Why did Judas commit the awful crime of selling his Master? God's holy word gives answer: "And satan entered into Judas . . . and he went and discoursed with the chief priests and the magistrates, how he might betray Him to them" (Luke xxii. 3). The adversary of God and man, for the time being, became as it were incarnate in the traitor, and led him on from the indulgence of avaricious thoughts to that terrible transaction for which there is no suitable name, and then left him to remorse, to suicide and to hell. How do you account for the conduct of Ananias and Saphira? The question of Peter who was inspired to know: "Ananias, why hath satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost?" (Acts. v. 3), teaches us that the snares of the adversary destroyed them; that they yielded to his devices, as Judas did, and as many others have done since and are doing now.

We know that satan is ever at work amongst ourselves. Wherever you gaze you behold his subjects, doing his work, helping his cause, impeding and counteracting the interests of Jesus amongst men and bringing sadness to His Sacred Heart. Look at the drunkards, swearers, blasphemers; the many whose dealings are dishonest, whose conversations are vile, whose lives are low and degraded. Look too at the vast number of those who are controlled by the passion of covetousness, whose generous impulses have been quenched and put down by the insatiable lust of mammon. Look at the number of Catholics who wallow in the mires of the foulest sins; who eat meat on Fridays, miss Mass on Sundays and are altogether indifferent to Jesus dwelling amongst them in the Sacrament of Love. What is all this,

but a proof of satan's power to lead men into slavery and to chain them amongst the tombs of the dead.

You and I, my brethren, have often had to battle with this same evil spirit. We will probably have many more encounters with him before the final victory is won. In all these struggles the example of Jesus in the wilderness should be our strong support. His victory over satan was intended in the Providence of God not so much to free us from conflict with the devil, as to make it easy for us to endure his assaults and to conquer. As our Savior knew how terribly they who were to belong to Him were to be tried by the evil one, and how their salvation would depend upon their faithfulness under trial, we must suppose that in His struggle with satan, He was providing a remedy, a source of strength and of encouragement for each one of us. St. Paul tells us that the temptation of Jesus is the source of the power which enables Him to help us under temptation. "For in that He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succor them also that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 18).

Bear in mind then, my brethren, that about yourselves, as once about your Lord, the hosts of darkness are leagued together. Each one of you by himself, and for himself, must carry on a relentless warfare against these spiritual enemies. It is the first law of our moral being that by temptation, by power exerted in overcoming satan and his cohorts, each of us is to win his way to an everlasting reward. In this constant struggle the temptation of Jesus should be to us all, a source of encouragement. It assures us of our Savior's assistance in our efforts against the evil one. It assures us that to be tempted is not necessarily to fall, nor is it a mark of God's displeasure with us. It provides us also with an example, which we must follow, in order to gain a victory over satanic attempts to draw us

away from our Heavenly Father, and in consequence merit the ministry of the holy angels after we have issued forth victorious from the struggle, as well as an eternal crown of glory which our Blessed Lord has prepared for all His faithful ones.

FIRST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

BREAD FROM STONES

(Matt. iv. 3)

THE evangelists tell us that after our Savior had been forty days fasting, watching and praying in the wilderness, satan approached Him and earnestly besought Him to take nourishment. He suggested that if He were the Son of God, as a voice from on high had recently declared Him to be, He could use the power which His Heavenly Father had given Him to turn some of the stones about Him into bread. To this temptation of the evil one Jesus replied: "It is written not in bread alone doth man live but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Matt. iv. 4). Let us, my brethren, make this First Temptation of Our Blessed Savior the object of our serious consideration this morning.

In studying satan's temptation of Christ, we should bear in mind that the evil spirit was in doubt concerning the Divinity of Jesus. He was no longer, as before his fall, acquainted with the secrets of heaven. His only knowledge of the Almighty's plans for the redemption of sinful man, it seems, was gathered from the pages of Sacred Scripture and from intimations given by God to creatures, such as the song of the heavenly choirs at the Savior's birth, the descent of the Holy Ghost at the baptism of Christ and the Father's voice proclaiming Him to be His Son. These incidents in the life of Jesus caused uneasiness to satan and prompted him to go to the desert to put all he had seen and heard to a test, by tempting Christ to sin. He was

aware of the condition to which our Savior had been reduced by fasting. Christ was, we know, true man. As such, His body was subject to all our sinless, human infirmities. He knew what it was to sit weary by the well in the noon-tide heat, and to ask a drink of water from an unwilling hand. He knew what it was to fall exhausted beneath the weight of the cross, and to feel the agony and the weakness of death.

We would believe then, even though the sacred pages were silent on the matter, that after forty days of fasting in the wilderness, Jesus was hungry and craved for food. This was satan's opportunity. He had determined on directing his assault on Christ, against the appetite—the most obviously weak part of human nature, and the scene of his most ordinary and coarsest victories. Like a crouching leopard he had concealed himself till the favorable moment had arrived for springing on his Victim. Seeing Jesus weak and hungry after His long fast, he came forward and said to Him: "If Thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread." Jesus answered him: "Not in bread alone doth man live but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Matt. iv. 4).

Whilst the words: "If Thou be the Son of God" could in one sense be spoken but to Him, Who is the only Begotten Son of the Father, and whilst the exhortation: "command these stones to be made bread," had a meaning for Him which it cannot have for us, yet this first assault of the evil one upon our Savior is an exact type of a vast class of temptations which are constantly being suggested to us, all of which are marked by this common character, that they propose an unlawful, sinful method of relieving some real or imaginary need, or of escaping from the presence of some pain. For instance, you are famished in body, because of hard labor, or in mind, because of trouble or from

excessive brain work and you crave some relief. The tempter comes to you and offers you nourishment. There is nothing in God's law which condemns one who, because of his physical or his mental condition, craves for nourishment, for rest or for relaxation. It is the food which satan offers him that is to be condemned. A real need of refreshment makes the danger of one's falling before the temptation of the evil one the greater, if lawful remedies are not easily obtainable.

This fact should cause our sympathy to go out to those poor creatures, who because of their condition in life, are exposed to the more violent forms of this temptation. Poverty is a great stimulus to discontent, to a denial of God's providential care, and to the use of unlawful means in seeking relief from the miseries which follow in its wake, under the pretense that necessity knows no law. None of you have ever experienced the temptations which satan throws in the way of those who are really poor. In our favored country, cases of genuine poverty are but rarely met with. In other lands, however, the tempter finds multitudes homeless and famine-stricken and exhausted, with no apparent alternative but to sin or starve.

Think of starving mothers, with starving little ones, approached by satan and tempted to sin. Think of the innumerable poor creatures who all day long walk the streets of many of the great cities of the world searching for work, who towards evening on their way back, tired, cold, and hungry, to fireless garrets or to damp cellars, are urged by the devil to drown their sorrows in the flowing bowl. Think of homeless outcasts, racked with pain, wasted by sickness and exhausted by want, to whom satan suggests suicide as the proper remedy for ending an existence that is nigh intolerable. Think of young boys and young girls at work in the shops and factories and offices of our own

city, who require a superhuman courage to keep their faith and to save their virtue.

These temptations which I have recalled have been experienced by but few of you. When the tempter comes to you, he does not find hunger gnawing at your vitals. Your wants are not real; in no sense are they pressing, and should you fall before the suggestion of satan, your fall is inexcusable. When you are tired or hungry, or when you fear the ridicule of the unbeliever, or of the unscrupulous, the tempter approaches you and prevails on you to break the law of abstinence or of fasting. You may be depressed in spirit and the enemy comes to propose as a relief, that you indulge in intoxicating drink, or relax your mind by dangerous reading, or in some other way endeavors to induce you to meddle with stones which look like bread. Your political or your social advancement may be at stake and you are tempted to take some view on a public question that will bring you popularity, cause you to be pronounced liberal-minded, although this view is opposed to the dictates of conscience and to the voice of the Catholic Church. You may have children, and the tempter convinces you that in spite of the teaching of your religion, you can raise your little ones to be good, intelligent Catholics, and at the same time insure them greater success in life by sending them to schools where God is given no recognition. You may have been teased and harrassed by dangerous imaginations and fatigued by a constant struggle against them, and the devil suggests that if you would fully indulge just one of them, and just once, you might escape the annoyances of a long, wearying and perhaps, after all, unsuccessful contest. In the intervals between temptations to greater guilt, there are constantly recurring, occasions on which you are urged to smaller faults of sloth, or of neglect of domestic duty, or of participation in improper conversations. In all these

and many other similar temptations, though the variety both of species and degree is immensely great, the common feature is, that the tempter detects, or thinks that he detects, some craving on your part, and he aims at getting you to take for granted that relief is absolutely necessary, and then offers you some sinful or irregular means of obtaining it.

Mark, my brethren, Our Lord's way of dealing with such temptations. Remember that it was for our sakes He permitted Himself to be assaulted by the evil one. Notice how promptly He rejects the suggestion of satan; how precise and peremptory is His tone and how completely He cuts away the ground from under the false principles that are insinuated. He waives all question about His being the Son of God, or how it behooved Him in that character to act. He takes His place as a son of man, and lays His hand upon an incident in the history of the children of Israel, who, led out into the wilderness and continuing as destitute of common food forty years, as He had been for forty days, received in due time the manna provided for them by God, Who said to them afterwards by the lips of Moses: "He afflicted thee with want, and gave thee manna for thy food which neither thou nor thy fathers knew, to show that not in bread alone doth man live but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Deut. viii. 3).

It was by the word of the Almighty's creative power that manna was provided for those hungry Israelites; that word went forth at the Lord's own time and to meet the wants of creatures in the Lord's own way. Upon that same power Jesus, hungering like the Israelites in the desert, will rely. There is no need of Him turning stones into bread in order to sustain life, since His Father could provide other kinds of food, if He so pleased, and so He will leave Him to do as He wishes. From entire dependence on His Father,

Jesus had no desire to be relieved, by using the higher, the Divine faculty that was in Him, as a mere instrument for self-gratification. The miraculous powers conferred on Him were to be employed for the glory of His Father, not for His own private use; as spiritual aids in His work as the Messiah, not for His human convenience. Again and again He walked the hundred miles between Galilee and Jerusalem, though He could have transported Himself in an instant. At Jacob's well He sat thirsty till the coming of a Samaritan woman. Even in the agonies of His Crucifixion, when He could have summoned twelve legions of angels to His aid, He wrought no miracle for His own relief. His mighty works were all for the benefit of others. He brought health to many a diseased body, soundness to many a lunatic mind, joy to many a mother's heart, and light into many a home over which sorrow hung, but not once did He employ His miraculous power in His own behalf. Had He turned a stone into bread for His own sustenance, it would have been an act contrary to the whole design of His life. As man, He was dependent on the will of heaven. Were He to use His Messianic gifts for His personal comfort, He would be taking Himself out of His Father's hands and showing distrust of His loving care.

The reply of Jesus to satan's suggestion that He turn some of the stones about Him into bread, in order to relieve the pangs of hunger, caused by His long fast, lays before God's children a principle of the very widest application in all the perplexities and difficulties of life. Christ spoke those words: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" as our elder Brother. He addressed them to the whole race of God's puzzled and well-nigh despairing children. Every question which rises and perplexes us about our surroundings—why God appointed them—is answered by our Sav-

ior's reply to satan's temptation, "Man lives not by bread alone," that there is another, a better life, which the very absence of bread, the failure of material surroundings, brings into greater prominence.

To limit one's mental horizon to the material is to ensure only deeper and darker despair, to raise only fresh and more unanswerable questions. This, and this only, is certain—there is a higher life, a life known and felt and realized by those who are convinced that God is their Father and therefore trust Him; and this life is sustained, not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. This great principle enunciated by our Divine Teacher and often very slowly, very painfully grasped by creatures, is a rebuke to all who expect that the sustaining gifts of nature will, as it were necessarily, be forthcoming for the needs of men. He would have us bear in mind that behind those gifts, behind the regular methods of their ministration to men, behind the laws of nature, as we call them, is the free and sovereign will of God. "Not in bread alone doth man live"; his life is sustained by no necessity of natural provision, "but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."

In other words man's continued existence is willed by God, and the Divine will can secure its accomplishment by any means it wishes to choose. If the regular methods cease then He will provide the needful sustenance by new and, as we say, miraculous methods. Bread seems absolutely necessary for life, but if life be really best for us, God can and will preserve it in other ways. He will sustain it by His mere word, as He did for Moses and Elias. For the aid and comfort of His chosen people in the time of famine, He sent the sons of the patriarch Jacob into Egypt (Gen. xlii. 2). For forty years He fed the children of Israel in the wilderness with manna from heaven

(Deut. viii. 2). He sent a raven with food to the Prophet Elias (3 Kings xvii. 6) and thought of the needs of Daniel in the lion's den (Dan. xiv. 37). So we may say of every want, whether bodily, intellectual or social, if it be really for His glory and for our good that this need should be supplied, or that we should be delivered from this or that distress, God has His own way of doing it.

But again, and still more directly, you are to repel satan's temptation by denying the necessity for relief which he tries to get you to take for granted. "I must live," "I cannot starve," "I cannot endure this misery, this disgrace, this humiliation," are expressions which the evil one often puts in the mouth of creatures. There is no necessity of relief from these evils. Man's true life, the only life that is worth living, is not earthly and temporal; it is the life of grace, the life of suffering, the life of obedience to the law of God. Nothing, my brethren, must ever be permitted to destroy this life.

Our Savior's reply to the tempter: "Not in bread alone doth man live but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God," has a wider meaning still. It states a fact of great significance,—that whilst the material requirements of man may be satisfied to the full, his well-being requires something more. Even though all his temporal needs should be supplied him, he would not be satisfied. Besides these he has other needs, other interests, other anxieties, which belong to an existence that is not temporal, and to a sphere of activity that is not seen. At all times and everywhere men have lifted up their hearts to a Supreme Power Whom they cannot see or hear or touch, and Who nevertheless holds them in complete subjection.

Each creature too has deep-seated within him a certain imperious principle which sits in judgment on his deeds, forcing him, even against his will, to condemn some of

his actions and to approve of others, and assuring him that a day is to come when he must give an account to an Almighty Ruler above of every act of his life. Man does not, like the other animals with which in physical form and function he is so closely allied, find final satisfaction in the ordinary activities of physical existence. Always and everywhere he reveals a mysterious longing which nothing material or temporal can satisfy. Our Lord's answer to satan: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God," gives an explanation of this craving of the human soul.

In man's nature there is an element that is not of the earth, and cannot be fully satisfied with anything that is earthly. This element is an immortal soul created to the image and likeness of God Himself. It matters not that man may have degraded himself, in the exercise of his free will, he cannot altogether part company with his higher self. He may mar that soul that came beautiful and innocent from the hand of God, still the stamp of his divine ancestry is upon him and is perceptible even through the foul defilements of savagery and sin. All this, my brethren, was implied in the answer of our Savior to the first temptation of satan: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."

In conclusion, my brethren, let me ask you to so regulate your lives, according to the principles laid down by your Blessed Savior, that in the end you may be crowned for fidelity to duty. By His own perfect example, showing us what man should be and do, Jesus awakens our conscience, whilst by His grace He enables us to correspond with its dictates. We all, in the ordinary affairs of this world, recognize the law of losing the lower to gain the higher life. The soldier on the battlefield is admired by us, because he dies rather than prove himself a coward. The captain of

the sinking ship will not shirk duty. He stays at his post until the last passenger and every member of his crew has been taken into the life boats. The engineer foresees a terrible disaster; is conscious that his train is rushing on to destruction. He might, perchance, save himself by jumping but stays at his post. He is found crushed beneath the wreckage, his hand cold in death, tightly clasping the throttle. These men were heroes; they died at the post of duty; they sacrificed the lower for the higher life of honor and courage. Heroism in the spiritual order is demanded of every follower of Jesus. For all who look to Him as their Leader, life is a spiritual condition which only spiritual forces can support. Better die than fail in honor, or forfeit your virtue, or lose your life as a true child of your Heavenly Father. "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."

SECOND TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

PRESUMPTION

(Matt. iv. 6)

OUR Savior's resistance of the First Temptation of satan took from the evil spirit all hope of leading Jesus into sin through the sensual appetite. He determines, therefore, on tempting Christ in another way. By an exercise of preternatural power he transported almost instantaneously the Sacred body of Jesus from the desert, and placed it on the pinnacle of the temple. Our Lord submitted to this audacity; allowed satan to grasp hold of Him, to pick Him up in his arms, and to fly through the air with Him, as he afterwards permitted His enemies to seize and torture Him and nail Him to the cross, knowing that such was the will of His Father. Having placed Jesus on the topmost pinnacle of the temple, of such stupendous height that we are told by the Jewish historian Josephus no one could gaze down from it into the depths below without his brain growing dizzy, satan said to Jesus: "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written: 'that He hath given His angels charge over Thee and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone'" (Matt. iv. 6). To this temptation Jesus replied: "It is written again: 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'" I wish, my brethren, to study with you this morning this Second Temptation of our Savior.

The Second Temptation of Christ by satan shows the subtlety of the devil's intellect. Jesus had foiled his first attempt to lead Him into sin by declaring His absolute trust

in God. Not even the pangs of hunger in the desert could weaken His belief that His Heavenly Father could, and in His own time would, prepare for Him a table in the wilderness. Adapting himself, therefore, with serpent cunning to this discovered mood of the Savior's mind, the tempter challenges Him to put this confidence to a test, not by relying on it to gratify an immediate need but to avert an impending peril. It would have been useless, he may have said to Christ, to have shown Thy Divine Power in the desert, as none would have been benefited by it. Here, however, it is quite different. Of all places none is so well-fitted for a vindication by some startling miracle of your rank and authority as this holy city, and no spot in it is so suited for a manifestation of Thy Divine Mission as this Temple, the center of the national religion and the chosen dwelling-place of God. About you dwell the children of God's covenant; the heirs of His promises. How sad is their present condition! Behold the deeds of darkness which they are committing before your eyes. See the children of holy Abraham, over whom your Eternal Father has watched for many ages with tender love, now the slaves of sin. See men, proud of their own wisdom, scoffing at the wisdom of God and openly boasting of their unbelief. See blind leaders of the blind, busy in their mischievous toils, whilst the great body of the chosen people are ignorant and helpless and wander about as sheep without a shepherd. They will all readily pay you homage and accept you as their leader, just as soon as you give them some convincing proof that you are really the Son of God, the long promised Messiah.

All this was truly desired by Christ. As Pure and Holy Man He loved those around Him—relations, friends and countrymen—with the different affections of relationship, friendship and patriotism, and loving them He desired to

confer upon them that which would be the greatest blessing in his power to give—a true knowledge of Himself. As Redeemer He desired to reveal Himself to those who looked forward to and needed Redemption. When satan, therefore, said to Him: “Cast Thyself down,” he appealed to an intense desire in Christ to vindicate the truth of His Father’s promises and to manifest His Divinity to creatures in a way which would carry with it irresistible conviction.

Our Lord at this time was standing in full view of the temple courts beneath Him. These courts were ever thronged with devout worshippers. Into their sacred precincts were drawn those who had spiritual instincts, cherished heavenly desires, looked for the Redemption of Israel and to whom the sight of the Promised Messiah was the chief longing of their hearts. They were convinced that their Temple was the very place where Israel’s Savior would appear. Prophecies guided them to this sacred spot as the one where He would reveal Himself. The place, therefore, and the assembled worshippers suggested the manifestation which was proposed to Christ.

We are not to suppose that in the evangelists’ narratives the full conversation which took place between Jesus and satan has been given us. In their accounts of incidents in which our Blessed Lord figured, their constant method was to give in a condensed form the substance of what was said or of what occurred. The words addressed by the tempter to Jesus, standing on the pinnacle of the temple, are to be understood according to this rule. St. Matthew gives us only the substance or, more properly, the essence of satan’s assertions and proposals. In effect his words and actions amounted to this: “Cast Thyself down. Give Thy people a convincing sign that You are all Your Father, speaking from a cloud, declared You to be. Flash down like a star into the midst of the multitude which now crowds

the temple below You. Fear no danger, for God, in Whose confidence You rely, has pledged His sacred word to protect You from all harm. 'He hath given His angels charge over Thee and in their hands shall they bear Thee up lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.' "

In this Second Temptation satan hoped for two ends. The One Whom he had placed on the pinnacle of the temple might be God. He might be only man. If, stung by his taunts, He should try to prove His Godhead, which really did not belong to Him, by throwing Himself headlong from the temple, death was certain, and the Prophet of Nazareth was removed forever from his path. If He were God, on the other hand, then, in the first place, He would be obeying his command, and in the second place, acting contrary to the whole tenor of God's dealing with man, which, as satan himself must have known, protects trustfulness in danger but not presumption. He asked Him in short to destroy Himself, if he were man; to sin, if He were God. Jesus to the confusion of the evil one instantly answered: "It is written again: 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' "

Presumptuous dependence on God in matters to which He has not promised to extend His help is a very common temptation. More creatures destroy themselves by the vague, vain, idle hope that they shall some day be saved, than by the despairing conviction that they shall certainly be damned. It is often said that "hell is paved with good intentions." It would probably be more proper to say that "hell is paved with idle hopes." Century after century has the tempter been whispering to myriads and myriads of souls: "Cast thyself down," assuring them that no harm could happen to them, and millions to their own disaster, have done and are doing his bidding.

This temptation becomes most dangerous when satan

quotes scripture. There has never been an error broached, but which claimed God's inspired word as its guarantee. Supported by their private interpretation of scripture, there has hardly been an extravagance of presumptuous reliance on God's protection, into which multitudes of misguided creatures have not been lead. They have literally cast themselves from precipices, thrown themselves into fire and water, refused medical aid in dangerous illness, fancying to the last that God would interfere in their behalf. Multitudes since the days of the Reformation have acted professedly on the blasphemous principle that believers are justified without sanctification, and that sin in the elect does not rob them of the Divine favor. Many of our own time claim that they are sure of salvation because the penalty due their sins was paid by the Redeemer on Calvary. There are others (non-Catholics), who believe that salvation is possible only within the pale of the Catholic Church, and who desperately stake their prospect of heaven on the presumption that God, Whom they intend to continue disobeying all through life, will in the end, give them an opportunity of being received into the Ark of Salvation.

There are many, unfortunately, belonging to the church of God, over whom the sin of presumption exercises a controlling influence. There are Catholics who know the malice of mortal sin, know that its penalty is everlasting misery, yet they boldly fling themselves down from their high station, trusting in the lying whisper that God has given His angels charge over them, and in consequence no harm can befall them. Perverting God's promise of mercy to the repentant sinner into a reason for delaying conversion until death is about to stop their career, they add sin to sin. They have not lost faith. They have no intention of dying without repentance. They intend making friends with God, when they have become old, and difficulties have become

fewer. If they should ever have, in time of temptation, a momentary dread of Divine Judgment, they argue that the sin to which they are tempted will be but one more, and that they can repent of it before death. They forget that all their former transgressions are in God's keeping; that the crime they are now tempted to commit is not a single, isolated sin, but one of a long series. They know that it is not their first offense, they do not realize that it may be their last.

There is no reason for them to be encouraged in sin, by the knowledge that God's justice has not cut off others whom they know to be greater sinners than themselves. In the Almighty's dealings with man there is no reasoning by analogy. He bestows on all creatures grace sufficient for salvation. He gives to all of us more than we have any right to expect, still He grants more to some than to others. Our own experience teaches us that while one is given time for repentance, another is carried off by a sudden death; one dies fortified by the last sacraments, another passes to eternity just as he had lived, without any sign of contrition. Some continue for years in sin, others are cut for their very first offense. For an only sin the rebel angels were cast from heaven. Adam for his first violation of God's law lost Paradise and implicated the human race in his ruin. Why should any of us be so presumptuous as to imagine that God will permit him to continue in sin and wait patiently for his repentance, when He has not waited for others less guilty?

I need not be reminded that the Almighty wishes not the death of the sinner, but desires that he be converted and live. I need not be told that when the sinner in sorrow turns away from his transgressions with a determination never more to offend his God, there is mercy for him. Yet, my brethren, no language can fittingly characterize the folly

and wickedness of that presumptuous confidence which clings to Divine Mercy only to abuse it, as if it were an invitation to sin, with a guarantee that no punishment would follow. God's revealed word assures us that on one condition only will we be received with pardon,—that we turn to Him with deep contrition for the past, with a firm purpose of amendment, and with the determination of making satisfaction to Him for our crimes. Any hope founded on a different principle, any hope which tends to diminish to our view the danger of persevering in hostility to Him, as if our pardon were at all times easy and certain, shall find no asylum, even in the bosom of Infinite Mercy.

Yet, it is on such hope as this, that many a sinner relies for mercy. No matter how grievous may have been his offenses against God's law, he cannot bring himself to believe that he is one day to fall a victim of eternal flames. The blasphemer who abuses every hour the Name of his Redeemer; the drunkard who extinguishes his reason in the brutalities of intemperance; the votary of impure pleasures, branded as he is with the execration of God,—all look forward with confidence to the future possession of heaven, though still persevering in the same career of iniquity which leads them every day further from it.

The example of the Penitent Thief is often quoted by these creatures who continue in sin and hope to be converted at the hour of death. It has been remarked that within the pages of the sacred volume mention is made of none other than the Penitent Thief, who became converted at the hour of death. This one instance is referred to, it is said, that none may despair, and that none may presume. Presumption and despair are the two great rocks on which we are ever in danger of making shipwreck; and the account given us of the crucifixion of the two thieves on Calvary may well serve to guard us against both these

dangers. It should guard us against despair, for why should any one despair, who reads of the thief who at the last minute was converted on the cross. It should guard us against presumption, for who dare presume when he hears that there was another thief on another cross, who died unconverted there. The greatest sinner who lives may be encouraged by the one, but the boldest may be deterred by the other.

Yet how often do sinners seek to silence their consciences, solace their fears, put aside the monitions of duty, and continue from day to day and from year to year at enmity with their God, by the remembrance of the mercy, shown the thief on Calvary. It is no uncommon thing to hear men referring to this case, and comforting themselves with the assurance that they have only to echo the prayer of the dying thief to find entrance into the paradise of God. They are, my brethren, in the hands of satan, who assures them that they have nothing to fear in eternity, for God has given His angels charge over them and no harm can befall them.

Again, my brethren, this Second Temptation of Christ is a type of a very dangerous class of temptations which besets persons of a truly religious life. When satan dared assail Holiness Itself, it is not surprising that he should approach with his evil suggestions those who model their lives after that of Christ. No one can press on courageously in the path on which Jesus led without at once meeting with the opposition which comes from temptation. It is when we set ourselves to "the service of God" (Ecclus. ii. 1) as the song of Sirach tells us, that we are to prepare our souls for temptation. When men aim at higher things, and fast and pray and seek to keep themselves in retirement, or at least in innocence from the world, that the tempter is certain to assail them.

When people have lived for many years in the daily practice of religion, and have been long free from grievous sin, they feel that God has given His angels charge over them, and that they are safe. They sometimes trust in God's keeping, without considering the limits and conditions under which that keeping is promised to them. It is not promised absolutely, making them safe anywhere. Neither are they extravagant enough to think so. They know positively that they have no warrant in looking for God's keeping, should they stray from the path of duty, or run unnecessarily into danger. Our Heavenly Father will protect His children even amidst the fiercest flames, as He protected the three youths in the Babylonian furnace, but this He will do, only on one condition, if like Sidroch, Misach and Abdenago they be thrust in by the hands of others, or by unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances, and not by any wilful imprudence or curiosity of their own. Deliberately to court danger is to invite a fall.

We must never forget that to be exposed to temptations, which are not of our own choosing, and which are sprung upon us unexpectedly and against our will, is one thing, while wilfully to go into danger ourselves without sufficient cause, is quite another. So long as we stand firm where God's Providence has set us, we are secure, but when we put ourselves with reckless self-confidence in the way of temptation, when we, trusting in our own power, go up to giddy heights, we become unsteady in our exaltation, and have no right to expect Divine support. The devil tempts us when he thrusts sin before us, but when we approach it of our own selves, it is then we who tempt the devil, and "lead us not into temptation" is a prayer which will not be heard from the lips of him who makes no effort to avoid it. There is no mockery like that of him who kneels and prays: "Lead us not into temptation," and then, arising from his knees, rushes

straightway into it. God will not work a miracle to save us from peril into which we have deliberately or causelessly thrust ourselves.

We need in moral life, to a very large extent, to exercise the good sense we display in dealing with the common dangers of daily life. In many places notices are put before us: "Look out for the cars," "Watch your step," "Beware of the dog," "Danger ahead," "Drive slowly." It requires no scholarship, philosophy or mysticism to understand these curt instructions. The instructions of God's word are just as explicit. If a place be dangerous or doubtful—keep out. If a book be tainted—leave it alone. If a path leads to error or to vice—turn from it. If a companion be an occasion of sin—keep away from him. If you be uncertain as to the legitimacy and safety of any suggested course—give yourself the benefit of the doubt and refrain. He who so conducts himself walks humbly, prayerfully, watchfully, on the path of quiet duty. On the other hand, he who falls before the suggestions of the evil one, is he who dallies with temptation, who trifles with the devil, who strays carelessly, or gazes curiously, or lingers guiltily beside the domain of sin.

Be on your guard then, my brethren, when satan approaches to tempt you, to cast yourself down from that high pinnacle whereon you are now standing. Answer him as Jesus answered him: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." You are God's child; He is your Father,—trust Him. Amidst the accidents of life, in its dangers, in its difficulties, in its moral crises, yea in the very valley of the shadow of death,—trust Him, but in patience, not in rebellion; in faith, not in audacity; in humble resignation, not in insolent self-will. In so doing shall He give "His angels charge over thee and in their hands shall they bear thee up lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone."

THIRD TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

ADORATION OF SATAN

(Matt. iv. 9)

SATAN in his first temptation of our Savior had sought to shake, if possible, Christ's confidence in His Heavenly Father, Who had brought Him to a condition of extreme want in the wilderness. He had sought also to induce Jesus to exert at once His own power to deliver Himself from the pangs of hunger by working a miracle to provide Himself with food. Christ resisted the temptation and hallowed His Father's Name by claiming for men that they should not live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God. Our Lord's answer not only baffled satan in his attempt to discover who it was with whom he was dealing, but at the same time it furnished a simple reason against his proposal, inasmuch as it showed it to be utterly superfluous, and inconsistent with perfect reliance on God. Unable to shake the Confidence of Christ in His Father, the evil one sought to lead Him into the sin of Presumption. As promptly as before Jesus answered: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." These two repulses did not discourage satan. Determined on making another attempt to lead Jesus into sin, he carried Him to the summit of a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and said to Him: "All these will I give Thee if falling down Thou wilt adore me" (Matt. iv. 9). Our Lord answered this proposal: "Begone satan, for it is written: 'The Lord thy God shalt thou adore and Him only

shalt thou serve.' ” This Third Temptation of our Savior is similar to temptations with which we are being continually assailed. We will, therefore, make it the subject of our study this morning.

The Third Temptation of Christ displays the amazing insolence and audacity of satan and his desperate obstinacy in carrying on an assault even in the face of repeated defeats. It gives us also an idea of the limit, as well as of the extent, of his knowledge and power, and warns us to prepare our souls for conflict with this evil one. He has kingdoms for us as he had for Christ. They are of different kinds and of various values, suited to the tastes of each one of us. He observes indications already given by the soul to be ensnared by him of the kind of kingdom it would prefer, and this he offers in consideration of homage paid himself. He may not, my brethren, tempt you boldly as he tempted Christ. It may not be apparent to you that you are actually adoring satan when you fall before his wiles. The act of adoration which he asked of our Savior, and for which he offered Him all the kingdoms of the world, is not a common condition imposed on those whom satan would lead astray. He knows that his plans would miscarry were his presence detected. Hence he hides himself. He is none the less present, however, because invisible.

Idolatry practised amongst barbarous peoples is the result of satan's scheming for the adoration of creatures. Those nations who worship mere blocks of wood, sticks, stones, animals, images do so not because of their ignorance, but because they have undeniable proofs that invisible intelligences, superior to man, have manifested themselves in these. They know of wonderful works effected by these so-called deities, and of remarkable revelations made by them. What these people intend to worship are the unseen spirits, believed to exist in or about the statues or symbols conse-

crated to them. Hence it is said: "All the gods of the gentiles are devils" (Ps. xcv. 5). St. Paul also tells us: "The things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God" (1 Cor. x. 20). Remarkable phenomena still occurring among modern pagan nations, tend to prove that the evil spirits are at the bottom of idolatry, however different the symbols may be under which they seek the honor due to God alone.

Amongst more enlightened peoples, whilst satan is ever seeking the creature's adoration, his manner of obtaining it is different. He has kingdoms to give away now, as when he tempted Christ in the wilderness. To some few in whom he recognized a certain grandeur of spirit which would spurn all but the very highest of his prizes, he has made the same offer that he made Our Lord. He has induced them to aspire to the actual dominion of the whole world, and has led them on through seas of blood and countless crimes, in hope of winning the coveted prize. These creatures, however, have been few in number. The great majority are willing to adore satan for less reward. Whatever stands between you and your Maker, whatever so effectually exalts itself in your heart as to withdraw your affections from God, whatever closes your soul against the visitations of the Holy Ghost, whatever exercises that exclusive jurisdiction over your mind which belongs to the Supreme Being, that object, that principle, that pleasure, that passion, that business, is an Idol in which satan has taken up his abode, and through which he robs the Almighty of worship due Him. So numerous, my brethren, are these idols before which creatures bow low in adoration, that I can call your attention to none but to those most commonly employed by the evil one in drawing God's creatures away from the service of their Creator.

Many pay adoration to satan in the adoration of self.

That mysterious and incomprehensible being called "self" rules over the lives and destinies of creatures with despotic sway. It exhibits a hundred shapes, and has a multiplicity of operations, but is at bottom the same principle of corrupt and selfish pride. In one it is pride of opinion, in another, pride of learning, in another, pride of wealth, in another, pride of station, in another, pride of fashion, in another pride of personal accomplishments, which seduces their affections away from God. Their hearts are as truly devoted to the service of another, distinct and separate from Him, as if the invisible idol in which they worship satan were wrought into one colossal statue and given their adoration.

Woman is often guilty of thus adoring the evil one. Many good women who are proof against all other schemes of the devil fall before worship of self. When a woman considers that she is better than some one else, when she, on account of her imaginary superiority, is exclusive in her friendships, looks down on those whom fortune has not favored, despises the poor as though beneath her level, what wounds to piety and to faith, what neglected duties, must be registered against her. Sometimes in her home she is tempted to reach out for power, to exalt herself above the level to which God assigned her. She knows that her Creator has commanded wives to obey their husbands, but the tempter comes and represents to her the satisfaction of having her own way, rather than of obeying, and she falls before his scheme. In her parish she is a factor for good. She is associated with every undertaking that aims at the honor and glory of God, and the temporal and spiritual welfare of others, but even into these, the lust for dominion, worship of self, pride, creeps, bringing a long train of evils, jealousies, and quarrels, sometimes ending in the abandonment and total failure of laudable undertakings. A pious woman will neglect her meals, abstain from amusement,

deny herself many comforts, overcome many repugnances, and throw her whole soul into a charitable work, but one luxury she will not forego,—that of having her own way and of being considered the chief mover and presiding spirit in all she undertakes. She does good for God's sake, but still she wants some notoriety. This petty kingdom has caught her fancy, and although she would not fall down to the extent of mortal sin to secure it, she is ready to make all that amount of submission which the evil one who is wary and content to wait, demands of her.

Dress is the idol to which other women pay adoration. They, through it, are giving to satan the homage he asks. No heathen god or goddess ever had so many zealous devotees, or a more absurd and humiliating ritual, than the goddess of Fashion. It is said, that ninety per cent of the average woman's talk is about dress. Ruffles and flounces and puckers and tucks are ever on her tongue. What the newest fabrics are, what patterns are most "stunning," what decorations are in vogue this season, what habit-makers have the call among the socially elect, and how the fat or the lean may be most becomingly clad, are the ordinary subjects discussed by women.

Not only is ninety per cent of the average woman's talk but fifty per cent of her time, is taken up with the all-absorbing topic of what she shall wear. With her selecting of material, which ordinarily means that the clerk has to handle time and again every piece of dress goods in the store before choice is made, then the fittings that follow, the time required in getting ready and in going and coming, fifty per cent will be allowed as a moderate estimate, and almost another fifty per cent must be consumed in exhibiting the dresses, once they are completed. Any of these poor foolish women will tell you what an endless, nerve-wrecking round it is, season after season, to follow the fashions. Whilst

women are thus paying worship at this idolatrous shrine, they are neglecting duties.

God does not object to His creatures manifesting correct taste, and clothing modestly and neatly the forms He gave them. The love of beauty and refinement belongs to every true woman. She ought to desire in moderation pretty dresses and delight in beautiful colors and graceful fabrics; she ought to take a certain but not too expensive pride in herself, and be solicitous to have everything belonging to her well chosen and in good taste, but she should never lose sight of this truth, that the adornments which will not perish shine from the heart. God has made it her highest duty to dress the soul that He has given her. He created her for a noble purpose. He gave her powers that are rich and strong; a genius that is bold and daring. She may walk the fields of thought, achieve victories of mind, spread around her testimonials of her worth, and make herself known and felt as man's co-worker and equal in whatsoever exalts mind, embellishes life, or sanctifies humanity.

When, however, her heart is set on dress, she has nothing for God, for the cause of suffering, for the world's betterment. Her attendance at church is not a religious act. Our churches are made places for the exhibition of fine apparel. The sanctuaries of the Most High are taken possession of by fools of fashion. Many a woman makes it a point to come late to Mass on Sunday that her new dress or her new hat, may attract notice. If the millions that are squandered each year by women on dress were employed as God intended its possessors should employ them, much of the world's misery, ignorance and sin would disappear. The consequence of this state of affairs in eternity is apparent. Multitudes of women will be shut out of heaven because of the evil of dress. The first peal of thunder that shook Sinai declared: "Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me,"

and woman must choose between the goddess of dress and Him who created her. Heaven is the abode of the meek and lowly of heart; it is the place of those who think more of their souls than of their bodies; it is for those who have more joy in Christian charity than they have in fashionable attire.

The preference of mammon to Almighty God has become almost universal in our day. One of the most decided points in the controversy between mankind and their Maker is respecting the relative value of the goods of this world. God's word has stamped them with the impress of an inferior worth, and most emphatically commands us not to set our hearts upon them. Contrary to His advice and warning, the constant endeavor of mankind is to exalt these goods into of pre-eminent importance; to attach to them an inordinate value, and to bestow upon their attainment, a most zealous and persevering labor. Of all forms of satan-worship, this is the most common and the least inexcusable.

The covetous man is not like the sensualist, goaded on by the power of native appetite, or by the force of a habit which he has himself created. Instead of embarking in the heat of passion, he sits down with all the calmness of calculating principle; he consecrates the best powers of his mind, the noblest faculties of his soul, and the warmest affections of his heart, to the one work of amassing a fortune. He makes the acquirement of gain the settled aim, and the prosecution of that aim the settled habit of his existence. With the wealth he has gotten by his own labor he feels himself as independent of God as the pagan does who, happy in the fancied protection of an image made with his own hand, suffers no disturbance to his quiet from any thought of the real but unknown Deity. Nor would it in the least aggravate his forgetfulness of God if the fortune, which is first in his thoughts and uppermost in his desires, were repre-

sented by a visible image and enshrined on a pedestal, around which he might assemble his household and make it the object of their morning and evening devotions. Baal and Moloch were not more substantially the gods of rebellious Israel, than mammon is the god of such creatures. No wonder then that He Who cannot be mocked by a vain show of lip service, while the heart is given to another, should so affectionately warn His children by His apostle to keep themselves from idols, to flee covetousness, which is idolatry.

Satan gains the adoration of other creatures by allowing them the gratification of sensual pleasures. It is incredible how many pay satan this homage, and give up the love and service of God because of lust. Impurity is the crying sin of the age. It more than any other, or probably more than all other sins combined, is doing satan's work. There are innumerable men whose lives are a continual round of lustful deeds. They live as brutes. Many of them profess no religion. In consistency they cannot do so. They must justify their conduct. They cannot afford to treat the pleadings of conscience, or of religion, from an intellectual standpoint. The gospel of Christ reproves and condemns their deeds; it makes bitter their cup of pleasure; they cannot mistake the import of its warnings. They have thus a strong motive for wishing Christianity and its teachings false; for denying God, hell, heaven, and declaring their actions not sinful.

Unfortunately many Catholics are guilty of adoring satan because of these criminal pleasures. From infancy they had been taught that it is sinful even to indulge in an impure thought. They had been told, on the authority of God, that they who are guilty of sins of impurity, shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. In their younger days they were modest. They shuddered at the thought of committing an immodest act. During these years they loved and served

God and faithfully discharged all duties of religion. Then they were faithful at prayer; frequent at Holy Communion. But they finally listened to satan. He wanted their adoration and offered them as a reward, not the kingdoms of the earth and their glory, but the pleasures of lustful gratifications. Now they are numbered amongst the many who adore the evil one. They make no attempt to overcome their brute instincts. They have no thought of giving up their sinful lives. God is necessarily despised and forgotten. These Catholics may come to church. They may at Easter time, to satisfy parents or from some other motive, approach the sacraments, but their hearts are never brought to giving up their sinful practices. In the life of one of these libertines there is not one circumstance wanting to convict him of the awful charge of being a worshipper of satan. The Supreme Being could not be more effectually deposed from His throne than He is from that man's affections. It would not in the least heighten his apostasy or aggravate his forgetfulness of God were he to raise a molten image to his lusts, after the most disgusting example of the ancients, and surround it with all the pomp of an outward and visible adoration.

Such, my brethren, are among the more common ways, in which creatures pay adoration to satan. There are, however, as you know, many others. The man who is a slave to intemperance, the man who is dishonest in his dealings with others, the man who neglects the duties of his state in life, all are as truly paying adoration to satan as is the man who makes an idol in honor of the evil one and falls down before it. Look, therefore, my brethren, into your souls and see if any objects have entered there and seduced it from allegiance to its Maker. See if any principle, any passion, is exalted into the highest place in your affections and claims the jurisdiction which belongs to the Supreme Lawgiver. Those objects, those principles, those passions,

if they exist, are putting satan between you and your Maker. By virtue of His relation to you as your Creator and Preserver, He claims the absolute possession of your heart; He demands the first and most devoted homage of your rational powers; He insists that His will shall be the rule of your life.

If you are permitting any created thing to occupy the place of pre-eminence which belongs to Him, you are worshipping satan and not God. Your allegiance is claimed by two Masters. You must serve one; you cannot serve both. In whatever degree you give your heart the exclusive possession of which belongs to God and is claimed by Him to any sensual gratification, to any person, to any business, to any passion, in that degree you become a rebel against the Divine Majesty and pay adoration to the prince of darkness. Guard yourselves carefully against the seductions of wealth and power as they almost invariably lead to forgetfulness of the Creator and its consequent result—the abomination of idolatry, actual as well as moral. Our Lord's reply to satan warns you against every kind of worldliness, love of power, ambition and the virtual worship of the devil, called in holy scripture, the "god of this world." However, with the pure intention of seeking God's glory in all things, of making His service the end of all your actions, wealth, rank and power will be no hindrance to you, but rather the means of fulfilling the end for which you were created, and of glorifying God in the place and time in which your lot has been fixed.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS

(*Concluding Sermon*)

"Then the devil left Him; and behold! angels came and ministered to Him."—*Matt. iv. 11.*

THE Sacred Scriptures tell us that satan in his attempt to lead Jesus into sin had in vain run through the whole range of his contrivances for the seduction and deception of creatures; that he had tempted every appetite; had tried his power of illusion; had even been permitted to transport Our Lord from place to place, and had endeavored to mislead Him by a false application of that very Word of God to which Christ Himself had uniformly appealed to foil His adversary. Finding himself defeated satan fled, leaving Jesus "for a season" as the evangelist tells us, and that on his departure "angels came and ministered to Him" (*Matt. iv. 11*). The concluding words of the gospel account of Our Blessed Savior's struggle with the evil one in the wilderness, suggest a very important matter which I will make the subject of my instruction this morning. I refer to the "Ministry of Angels."

The existence of innumerable hosts of spirits created as we were by the fiat of the Almighty, yet higher in the scale of being than we, inasmuch as they are not burdened with flesh and possess powers and faculties that give them a vast advantage over us, is one of the dogmas of our holy religion. These beings were created capable of knowing God, and of paying Him the homage of their adoration and love. Their knowledge is of a far higher and more perfect order than that which we in our present state can attain. In this vast

creation the Almighty distributed His gifts in certain measure and order, forming some with capabilities of sublimer degrees of knowledge and of love, and dealing out to others, according to their respective destinations, a less proportion of His gratuitous favors. To all, however, He imparted a due capacity for happiness, an immortal nature, a will free in its choice of evil, and of good. Thus distinguished these exalted beings were placed like man in a state of probation. Heaven with its glories, unchangeable felicity, the eternal possession of God Himself was to be the reward of their fidelity. On the other hand, indescribable woes, endless remorse, eternal torments were to punish their unfaithfulness to God.

The trial, for innumerable multitudes, was disastrous. Lucifer, one of the most exalted of these heavenly spirits, carried away by self-conceit, forgot the duty of love and adoration he owed his Creator. Instantly the punishment of heaven fell upon him, and upon all who had shared in his crime. The superhuman powers with which the angelic nature had been invested in its first creation, were, however, despite their fall, discernible in the rebellious angels. Whilst their desecrated forms no longer reflected the pure image of their Creator, yet they were still spiritual and immortal, and possessed of more than earthly power and knowledge. Hatred for God and for all who serve Him incessantly possessed them.

On the other hand, the angels who remained faithful to God during the period of probation were called to the eternal possession of Himself. As long as eternity shall last, it shall be their happy privilege to contemplate the beauty and sovereign perfections of the Godhead, ever finding in the Beatific Vision new sources of delight, new motives of admiration, new subjects for gratitude and praise. Whilst many of these blessed spirits at all times surround

God's throne, constantly adoring and praising their Creator, others are occupied in ministering to the needs of us creatures here below. They have been appointed to this work. He Who created us, Who loves us, and cares for us; Who gave us His Only Son; Who sends us His Holy Spirit, has deputed legions of holy angels to watch over us, to instruct us, and to minister to our wants. To question the truth of this teaching of our faith is to deny the infallibility of God's Church and to impugn the reliability of His revealed word.

Sacred Scripture tells us of various deeds which may be performed by the angels. It is within the limits of their powers, when permitted by God, to cause thunderstorms, hurricanes, shipwrecks, and earthquakes. They can stop the course of rivers; cause famine, or bring about fruitful harvests. They can inflict, or save from death, as they did in Egypt during the Exodus. They can liberate from prison, as they did in the case of St. Peter (Acts xii. 7). They can rescue from lions, as in the case of Daniel (Dan. vi. 22); from calumny, as in the case of Susanna (Dan. xiii. 45); from the sword as in the case of Isaac (Gen. xxii. 11); from perils of the sea, as they did Paul and his fellow travelers in their storm-tossed ship. They can cure the worst of human maladies, as they did the sick, the blind, the lame, the withered who waited by the Pond of Probatica, for an angel to move the waters (John v. 4). They assist creatures in temporal affairs. Agar's child was saved from death by thirst, in the wilderness, by an angel who pointed out a "well of water" to the afflicted mother (Gen. xxi. 17). Elias the prophet, received from an angel food, in the strength of which he walked forty days and forty nights till he reached the mountain of Horeb. Tobias was accompanied on his journey by Raphael, the Archangel (Tob. xii. 15).

Angels are also concerned in the moral government of

the world. They enter into the life of nations, directing, and ruling them, by their powerful influences. The Israelites were led for forty years in their journey through the wilderness by an angel. Another blessed spirit conducted the "pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night," and rescued God's people from the hand of Pharaoh. In the Book of Daniel (Dan. x. 13) we read of the Prince or Angel of the Kingdom of Persia; also of Michael, chief of all the good angels, and watchful guardian of the Chosen People.

What interests us most deeply is the fact that the angels, both good and bad, are concerned in our supernatural life. Throughout the sacred pages we read everywhere of a relentless struggle being maintained on behalf of God's elect by the good angels who are in constant conflict with the fallen angels. On the one side,—the side of evil,—there is a determined effort, not merely to turn the forces of nature against man, and thus bring calamities upon him, but also to assault him in his inner life, to ruin his spiritual hopes, and to mar forever his glorious destiny. Startling facts are laid before us in scripture as to the power of evil spirits in exercising the most intimate control over and holding closest communion with the inner life of man. We are told of satan establishing himself within the very soul of the creature, thus to sway and rule him. The fearful descriptions given us in the Sacred Volume of satanic activity prove beyond question that evil spirits can suggest sin to us; inflame our imaginations; excite and influence our wills; cloud our understandings; overrule and direct our energies. Whilst it is true, that they act under the restraining will of God, they are, nevertheless, as truly personal agents within their sphere of operation as we can be in our sphere. On the other side, there is equally a constant counter-plotting and earnest antagonistic strife on the part of the good angels to assist us struggling with the forces of satan, to ward off evil from us,

to direct all events to our good, to guide, console, encourage us, never leaving us, till their mission of loving sympathy and constant interposition has fulfilled its predestined end.

This teaching of our holy Church, supported by every page of the Old Testament, is confirmed by many passages found in the New Testament. Our Blessed Savior speaks of the good angels as watching over His "little ones" (Matt. xviii. 10); as rejoicing over penitent sinners (Luke xv. 10). St. John (Apoc. viii. 3) tells us that one of the offices discharged by the good angels is presenting the prayers of creatures to God. St. Paul calls the good angels: "ministering spirits sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation" (Heb. i. 14). In one word, the writings of the New Testament render indisputable the teachings of our Church that the good angels are now Christ's ministers of grace, as they shall be hereafter ministers of His judgment (Matt. xiii. 41); that from the earliest, to the latest epoch of man's destiny these blessed and glorious beings have a co-ordinate and co-extensive part to play on the same stage of life on which our own lot and probation are cast.

We believe also that to each one of us has been assigned by Our Heavenly Father a Guardian Angel. This blessed spirit is with us not only during the peace and innocence of childhood but at all other times throughout life. He never leaves us. Even sin does not drive him from us nor lessen his regard for us. On the contrary, like the strong, yearning, pitying love of a father for his erring child our falls render us dearer to him whom God has appointed to watch over us during our pilgrimage on earth. He defends us against our spiritual foes; helps us in prayer; strengthens us in temptation; will be by our bedside in our dying moments, and should we be saved, it will be his pleasant duty to introduce us amongst the elect of God.

These blessed spirits, invisible to us, are in the spiritual world what the thousandfold ten thousand ministrations of visible creatures around us are in the natural world. We cannot now, indeed, interchange sensible intercourse with them, but when their charge has been fulfilled in bearing our souls to the bosom of Our Father in heaven, we will rejoice the more, because we believed the truth and love of God in ordaining for us their unseen agencies. Being made one with Christ we share in and through Him what was His earthly joy; what cheered Him when His temptation was over; what sustained Him in His Agony, when He was weak, and Who meant the promise of His Almighty Father to be our blessing, our comfort, as it was His own: "There shall no evil come to thee; nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling. For He hath given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. xc. 10).

The angels played a distinguished part in glorifying the World's Redeemer during His earthly life. Whilst Jesus, Head of angels as well as of men, perfectly impeccable and in no danger from the assaults of hell, had not like men in general a Guardian Angel in the usual sense of the term. He had always in attendance a number of blessed spirits specially deputed to wait upon Him, and whose services He used at will. These angels were the immediate servants, guards of His sacred Humanity. We may well imagine the burning devotion with which they regarded it, inasmuch as therein was fulfilled that wonderful mystery of God's love which had been set before them at the beginning. By acceptance of that Mystery their own crowns had been won. It was now brought closer to them in this much that through it the ruin which its rejection had brought into their own ranks was to be repaired.

When the time was near at hand for the fulfillment of the promise made fallen man in the garden of Eden, one of

their number announced the coming of the long-looked-for Savior to her whom heaven had chosen to be His Mother (Luke i. 26). A few months later another angel accompanied by "a multitude of the heavenly army," told the shepherds of the actual birth of their Redeemer. When danger threatened the life of the Wonderful Child, an angel commanded Joseph (Matt. ii. 13) to leave his native land for awhile, and with Jesus and Mary take up his abode in Egypt. On the death of Herod, Joseph was ordered by an angelic messenger (Matt. ii. 19) to return to his own country. During His Public Life, Our Lord often spoke of the association of angels in His work. He said to Nathaniel: "Amen, amen, I say to you, you shall see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John i. 51). At the time of His seizure in Gethsemane He said to one of His followers who had resorted to force in His defense: "Put up again thy sword into its place. . . . Thinkest that I cannot ask My Father and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. xxvi. 53.) A legion in the Roman army was six thousand men at the very lowest. Twelve times six thousand angels would come in answer to a wish from Jesus. Nay, He says "more" than twelve legions. Think of this, my brethren, when you bow before the thorned crowned head and gaze upon the nailed hands and feet that there can be no limit to the available resources of the Son of God. Thousands of thousands of angels and principalities and powers would fill the air if Jesus willed it.

At the time of Christ's struggle in the wilderness, He had been left alone with satan. In accordance with His own wishes, it is believed, those blessed spirits who always attended Him had left Him for a time in order that in the weakness and humility of His Human Nature He might battle with the enemy of mankind, unaided, and defeat him.

When victory had been won these blessed spirits came forward exultingly, "to minister unto Him." Nothing has been told us of the nature of the ministry which the angels fulfilled for Jesus in the wilderness. It may have been that they carried Him triumphantly from the pinnacle of the temple on which satan had placed Him to the cave on the mountain side where His long fast had been endured. It is believed that then and there Jesus allowed the fatigue and strain and weakness which His forty days fast and his severe struggle with the evil one would naturally cause Him, to have their full effect, and that He condescended, as afterwards in His Agony in the Garden, to receive support and nourishment from the angels. He could have fed Himself, even in that desert, by a miracle.

We do not find, however, that He at any time during His life used His Divine Power for His Own Comfort or that of His Apostles. He used it for the crowds that had gathered to listen to Him. Twice He fed them in great multitudes with a few loaves. Of His disciples we read that with Him present they had when hungry, plucked ears of corn and ate them. At another time (John iv. 9), when weary and hungry He sat by the well, talking with a Samaritan woman, we are not told that He created food for Himself and His disciples, but that He sent them into the neighboring town to buy it. It is not probable then that in the wilderness when hungry after His long fast He provided for Himself by miracle. We have every reason to believe that the procuring of food for Him in His need was one of the duties performed by the angels who ministered unto Him.

Most consoling is the belief that we dwell in the midst of an invisible world, a world of most energetic and glorious life, of spiritual beings appointed by Our Father in heaven to defend us in our wearisome dangerous paths, and to help us reach our eternal home. These holy spirits are

about us at all times. They accompany us as we leave our homes to come here before God's altar. They are with us as we kneel in prayer. They are by our sides amidst dangers to keep us from harm. They gather about our beds to guard us as we sleep, continuing there the adoration of the ever present God with which we close our eyes.

Whilst it is true that the Lord Himself is our Keeper, our Shepherd, and our strong support, there is a specialty of love and of care in angelic guardianship that comes right home to us. We may not now, my brethren, be impressed with these truths as we should be. The day will come, however, when the Lord will open our eyes to see His holy ones near. In our last moments, when all of earth is becoming veiled and obscure, we will be enabled to read the complete history of angelic solicitude for our welfare all along the path of life through childhood's dangers, amidst the wayward rebellions of youth, and the more deliberate sins of later years. Throughout it all, their love for us never grew weary; their anxiety never lessened; their care never slackened. How grateful should we be to our Heavenly Father Who now gives us a sense of the reality of a most intimate and enduring companionship with His blessed angels; and a conviction that in every trial and difficulty there are about us at all times divinely appointed guardians utterly devoted to us and concerned about our dearest interests.

The reflections I have placed before you, my brethren, on the existence, the powers and the duties of the holy angels, may have caused some of you to plead guilty of having in the past neglected to avail yourselves of a great source of strength and consolation that your Creator has placed within your reach. Others of you perhaps must confess in sorrow that the presence of a Guardian Angel ever at your side has been scarcely recognized by you; that your regard for him and your appreciation of the services rendered

you by him may be summed up in your dry, formal heartless acknowledgment of him night and morning when you kneel in prayer. It may be that you have outraged the sanctity of his presence by actions which you would not have had witnessed by the lowest and basest among men. Who shall say what Christian souls shall be lost who might be saved were they now less criminally indifferent to the presence of those whom God has appointed Guardians over them? Who shall say how much the habit of lovingly communing with their angels has contributed to create holy men and women on earth and to people heaven with saints? At any rate we know that just as God's servants have advanced in His love, they have acquired a deeper and more grateful and more reverential sense of the presence of their angel guardians. Endeavor, my brethren, to atone for the past delinquencies, if you have failed in duty towards those blessed spirits to whom you owe so much.

THE BETRAYAL BY JUDAS

AS there have been in God's kingdom on earth men whose deeds have made their names the object of universal reverence, so there have been others whose crimes have made them objects of universal infamy and execration. The first place in this latter class belongs to Judas Iscariot. His name is the most execrable in human history; his crime the most abominable that ever emanated from that dark region of human sinfulness and degeneracy. He violated the most sacred obligations to the noblest of Masters; apostatized from the lowest motives, and in the meanest and most detestable manner. The history of this fallen Apostle is full of instruction and warning. Every part of it is calculated to make the most light-hearted serious, and the most hardened fearful. The best amongst us may learn from it lessons that will guide him through life, protect him against imitating the crime of Judas and incurring his awful punishment. I have thought it well, my brethren, to make Judas and his crime the subject of my instruction this morning.

Many are inclined to think of Judas as having been at all times a monstrous specimen of superhuman wickedness, with absolutely no redeeming trait about him. This is, of course, a mistaken notion. It needs no other answer than the fact that Judas had a vocation from on high to leave all things earthly, and to devote his life to the service of Christ. God calls to the sacred ministry those only who are well disposed and suited for the work He gives them. It is, therefore, certain that Judas was at least sincere and full of noble aspirations at the time he was set aside for the Apostolic

band. It is certain also that the Holy Ghost conferred on Judas, as on the other Apostles, all the special graces that were necessary for the sacred ministry; that for a time he was a faithful Apostle; preached the new gospel as zealously as did any of his companions; wrought miracles and cast out devils like them, and edified all by his fervent and holy life. To paint him, therefore, in the light of the after event, as some have done, disfigured with the leer of low cunning, scowling with the meanness of baffled craft and delayed cupidity, is false. It is very probable that at the time he accepted Christ's call to the sacred ministry he was in no way influenced by the passion which afterwards brought about his downfall. At this stage of his career he must have had many good praiseworthy qualities about him. We would infer as much from the fact that he had no sooner been introduced into the Apostolic circle than Jesus trusted him to the extent of making him Treasurer of alms collected for the maintenance of Himself and of His Apostles.

With all his good qualities, however, Judas had in his heart an evil passion—an inordinate love of money. In the beginning it was of such little consequence that he scarcely took notice of it. It was not a grievous sin; it was nothing more than a weakness from which no harm could come, he thought. And so neglected, this passion gradually developed in his heart, destroying there compassion, sympathy, love and every other virtue, like that poisonous plant whose pestilential exhalations destroy every germ of life in its vicinity, and change the soil on which it grows to a desolate waste.

You, my brethren, have seen at work in the souls of others this same passion which led Judas away from Christ. There is not one of you but knows of the blinding, hardening power which love of money exerts over the human soul; how it closes the creature's eyes to the disastrous consequences which stare him in the very face; how it deadens

remonstrances to which under other circumstances one would at once yield; how it carries him over obstacles, which at other times would at once have stopped him on the road to disaster; how the very interferences for which one should be grateful are resented. Judas acted as all of his kind act. He was heedless of warnings; deaf to the pleadings of those who saw calamity in the pathway over which he was hastening, until Avarice had become master of his soul, until money had become his god, his accursed idol. Then a great change came over him. He became heartily tired of the Apostolic life with its wanderings, its burdens, its vexations, its persecutions. Long before his fatal ending, Jesus had noticed his waning zeal, his growing worldliness, and his greed for money and had said, referring to him: "one of you is a devil" (John vi. 71).

He did not, however, abandon him to his fate; did not drive him from his little community as an unworthy member, but kept on laboring calmly and patiently in the hope of bringing about the reformation of His erring Apostle. No doubt, He often gave instructions to the twelve that were intended principally for Judas, cautioning them against the danger of worldliness. This was our Savior's favorite theme. He admitted no one to the apostolate until He had first made it clear that riches and worldly wealth were not to be looked for by those who would come after Him; that for one to be properly disposed for the work of saving souls there must be a complete self-surrender, a banishing of worldly dreams and of all thought of temporal gain or glory. The other Apostles who likewise in the beginning had worldly ambitions, profited by their Master's instructions. In Judas, on the contrary, the reverse process took place; what was good in him grew less and less until at last the sole bond which held him to Christ was what profit he could make out of the association.

With avarice controlling the soul of Judas he was hurried on from one sin to another. Before long he had become a thief. St. John says that he was guilty of taking money from the common purse, and applying it to his own use or to that of his family. He continued to grow in dishonesty, despite the fact that he was constantly in the presence of One who had given indisputable proofs that He was a Prophet sent from God and could read men's thoughts. One sin, my brethren, leads to another. Avarice made Judas a thief, and stealing made him unfaithful in the discharge of other duties, as well as an habitual deceiver, an embezzler and a hypocrite.

The gospels mention an occasion on which he professed to be more exact in the observance of God's law than was his Master. It was at the time Magdalen anointed the feet of Jesus with precious ointment. Judas thought her guilty of a sinful waste. "This ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor," he said. Lest the shameless hypocrite should receive any undue credit because of his pretended anxiety for the welfare of the poor, St. John (John xii. 6) makes known his real motive: "He was a thief," and had care of the purse. Our Lord on this occasion praised the act of Magdalen as one which was timely and should never be forgotten. At the same time He reproved Judas for his criticism of her conduct. His words, justifying Magdalen's act and condemning the censures of His Apostle, were but a mild reproof and intended to heal. To Judas they had a meaning which was hidden from all others. They told him that his Master knew all. It was a decisive moment in the Apostle's life. He must either cast himself down at the feet of Jesus, and with streams of penitential tears admit his wrong doing and plead for mercy, or his mortified pride must be allowed to rule him, and by a wilful hardening of his heart, precipitate a fall from which

there would be no rising. He chose the latter course. He hastened away from the gathering at Bethany to seek revenge for his Lord's rebuke. He suddenly had become obsessed with the one terrible idea of bringing about the death of Jesus. Hurried along by a demoniacal fury, the voice of conscience dead within him, his heart turned to stone, all remembrance of the mighty works and deeds, gracious words and innocent life of his Master for the moment obliterated as he abandoned himself to satanic influence, he hastened from the presence of Jesus and went direct to the assembled members of the Sanhedrim and agreed to deliver his Master into their hands on condition that they pay him for his treachery thirty pieces of silver. His offer was accepted. Judas lived up to his contract. Jesus was betrayed into the hands of His enemies and put to death.

Love of money, my brethren, has inspired many an evil deed. It has urged the creature on to break the commandments of his Creator. It has put a weapon in the hands of the murderer. It has sold the bodies of men and the hearts of women. It has made gigantic wrongs to flourish from age to age and practices utterly indefensible to be continued with the overwhelming sanction of society. It never inspired a darker deed than the betrayal of Jesus. There are some who would make light of the treason of Judas. They claim that Christ in selecting him for the Apostolic band knew he would be unfaithful, and, therefore, that He is more or less responsible for his fall. It is true, my brethren, that Our Savior was aware that Judas would betray Him. This foreknowledge of Christ, however, did not constitute a foreordination of Judas' treachery. He became the betrayer of his Master because he chose of his own free will to be such, not by an inexorable destiny or malign necessity. Jesus hoped that Judas might be saved from the dangerous tendencies which lurked within him. To this end He sur-

rounded him with good influences; touched him with His own grace and truth and love, but even Jesus could not make a good man out of Judas by force. It is simply the great familiar mystery that over against the almightiness of God stands the freedom of the human will. Judas was under no necessity of betraying Christ. He was free to be either a traitor or a faithful disciple and made his own choice. Jesus could not save him against his will.

“He that wrongs his friend
Wrongs himself more and ever bears out
A silent court of justice in his breast,
Himself a judge and jury and himself
The prisoner at the bar, ever condemned.”
—(Tennyson).

No sooner had Judas heard that Jesus had been condemned to death than he regretted his treachery and, without waiting to see if the sentence would be executed, hurried away to the very men with whom he had made his unholy covenant, and from whom he had received but an hour or two before the price of blood. As he entered their presence he cried out in the bitterness of his soul: “I have sinned in betraying innocent blood” (Matt. xxvii. 4). He thus bore witness to the innocence of Him Whom he had betrayed, and cast from him the price of his treachery. He repented of his sin; he confessed it; he flung from him the reward of his iniquity. Still, his repentance was not genuine because about it there was no faith, no love, no hope, no thought of turning to his Master for pardon. Satan who had blinded his eyes to the awfulness of betraying his Savior, now opens them to his hopeless condition; to the unpardonableness of his crime, and to the yawning abyss of hell that awaits him. In an effort to free himself from the crushing thoughts that had seized upon his soul, Judas threw himself in the arms of death. Fastening a rope about his neck and the other end

to the limb of a tree, he swung into eternity. It is claimed that the tree which he had selected for his ending shook his dead body off in terror ; that in the fall to earth the strangled wretch burst open, and that his bowels were strewn about the ground.

Thus, my brethren, ended one who had been ordained and fitted to be God's representative amongst his fellowmen. Though he was one of those who had been predestined to "sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke xxii. 30), he hanged himself in the sight of that valley where on the last day all the sins of the universe will be summoned by judgment (Joel iii. 12), that even they, foul, heinous, loathsome though they may be, may hurl their anathema, their curse at him who betrayed his Divine Master. He plunged into the gulf of eternal perdition in the presence of the World's Deliverer. This is the most awful feature in the traitor's history. He need not have perished eternally. Great though his crime was, it could not exceed the measure of Divine forgiveness. He had been a thief, a cheat. So had been the thief on the cross, and yet he found the way to Paradise. Judas had betrayed the Holy One of Israel. Thousands since his time have been as guilty and were saved. Judas failed in obtaining pardon of his sin because he died in despair, because in the presence of his Savior he made no appeal for mercy. There is but one sin from which the Blood of Christ will not cleanse us and that sin is despair—a denial of God's mercy, an unbelief in His Divine Word.

The history of this fallen Apostle proves to us, my brethren, that great religious privileges are no assurance against spiritual ruin. Of course these privileges may and should further our best and highest interests. Our Heavenly Father intends this. But the will of God must meet with favorable dispositions in the creature's soul. God's grace

can do its work only when the human will opposes no obstacle to its operation. No creature,—excepting the other Apostles—ever had or could have such opportunities for acquiring perfection as were given Judas. He was privileged to associate constantly with the Redeemer during His public ministry. Yet the same holy example and holy teaching which made St. Peter and St. John loving, self-denying saints hardened Judas into a traitor.

This may seem strange, but it is nevertheless true. You know in nature how the same force produces different results, according to circumstances. The same heat of the sun and the same genial showers that carpet the meadows with sweet and tender grass and make the garden to bloom with beautiful flowers, likewise cause the thorn, the brier, the deadly poisonous plant to grow more luxuriantly. St. Peter and St. John, on account of their association with Jesus, became saints because they improved opportunities that were presented to them. Judas failed to profit by these opportunities. He saw all, or nearly all, that they had seen. He heard all, or nearly all, that they had heard, and yet, because he did not cleanse his heart of its wretched covetousness, instead of growing holier and better through the works of Jesus which he had seen and the words of Jesus to which he had listened, he grew worse and worse. As far as Judas was concerned, Jesus had preached in vain that “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth” but in the state of his heart and mind; that man’s lasting treasures are in heaven, and that they only who hunger and thirst after justice, perfection, are blessed. Judas heard the parable of the Sower and Christ’s declaration that the cares and possessions of this world choke the word of truth in the soil of the soul (Mark iv. 19). He heard his Master declare: “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. vi. 24). “It is easier for a camel to pass through the

eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix. 24). Against these warnings, instructions, unpleasant truths, Judas closed his ears. He had no relish for the beatitudes and spiritual ideals of Christ, and as a consequence his fall was inevitable.

This is God's way of dealing with creatures. He gives them grace to help them on in the path to which He has directed their steps. They need not prove unfaithful to Christ. It is their own fault should they do so. God does not intend that they should fall; it would be blasphemy to say that He does. Yet many, as we know, do fall away from Him. They fall, like Judas, because of some miserable thirty pieces of silver. The crime of our age is that Jesus is being constantly sold for worldly consideration. Men possessed by worldly instincts learn to ignore principle. Fidelity to conviction, to truth, to honor, interferes sadly with their earthly prospects. Conscience they find to be a troublesome companion through life and so they push it aside. The only purpose of life is success, and to this end all their efforts are directed. Men actuated, controlled by such principles are Iscariots—traitors at heart to their God.

It is not alas, uncommon, as you all know, for men to jeopardize the growth of their moral nature for the sake of worldly interests, nor for men to disencumber themselves of their moral convictions for the sake of their advancement among their fellow creatures. The rottenness of such methods may not be perceived at first, but when the crisis comes, the evil foundations of such a life are discovered. Absorbing devotion to self disintegrates the character; hinders creatures from being religious, from remaining in Christ's service; separates them from Him, keeps them away from the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist and finally hinders them from reaching heaven. Such sinners are but following the example of Judas and betraying their Master.

One may know God's law, may study it, hear it frequently proclaimed, but accepting it, believing it, yielding oneself up to it and living according to it, this and only this will make one's privileges, one's knowledge of Christ and His holy will the blessing that it should be, that it may be, that it must be unless it is to be turned into a curse instead of a blessing, and bring one into a miserable likeness with the lost Apostle.

We are tempted to think of Judas as a character so wholly abnormal that a study of his life can afford us little practical profit. His crime we regard as being of such magnitude and baseness—the circumstances under which it was committed were so unusual, and the Personage against Whom it was directed was so unique—that the sin itself must be regarded as incapable of parallel, and the character of the offender must be out of comparison with that of any other sinner who has ever existed or may yet exist. These notions are erroneous. Judas is not the only one who has betrayed his Master. There are many like him in our own day who for the sake of gain violate conscience, neglect the eternal interests of their souls and bargain in the words of the traitor with the powers offering gain for transgressing God's law: "What will you give me and I will betray Him into your hands?"

This is the offer often made not by unbelievers but by creatures who have been privileged to know Jesus and to love Him, but who sell His friendship for a paltry consideration. There is danger of selling Christ for every soul no matter how near he be to his Master, in whom a canker is rooted, whether it be love of money, as in the case of Judas, ruthless ambition, the demon of lust, or a fierce and angry temper. We know there are bodily diseases which in the beginning are unobtrusive, unnoticed and capable of being extirpated, but which if neglected take deeper root, fasten

themselves on one limb or organ after another until the whole body is diseased. So in the moral world one unresisted propensity may in time acquire a tyrannical ascendancy that will make almost any conceivable crime possible in order to gratify it.

Bear this in mind, my brethren. If you do not battle with your own secret plague of heart, your love of money, or of power, or of lust, it will eat the very heart of faith within you, hand you over to satan and after embittering your life on this side of the grave, transfer you finally to an eternal life of perdition. Be on your guard, my brethren, lest the sin of Judas be your sin and his fate your fate. Satan has not ceased in our day to go "about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour," and it is by no means certain that you will all escape him. Remember that it is possible even for the best amongst you to deserve the judgment: "It were better for this man that he had never been born," uttered over the fallen Apostle by his Most Merciful Master. You may be nearer acting the traitor's part and incurring the traitor's condemnation than you in your imagined security think.

PETER'S DENIAL

FOR us, my brethren, the most important incident, in the career of St. Peter, is his denial of Christ. Its consideration must necessarily be productive of a salutary effect. It is more instructive than would be the study of his singular privileges, his self-sacrificing labors, or his glorious martyrdom. It teaches us courage, faith, prudence, humility, and at the same time inspires us with confidence in God's mercy, if unfortunately we too have been guilty of denying our Master. For these reasons, my brethren, I have chosen the "Denial of Peter" as the subject of my instruction this morning.

The denial of Christ, of which Peter was guilty, was aggravated by circumstances. Peter had been one of the most highly privileged of the Apostles. He had been given many indisputable evidences of his Master's Divine power. He had seen the eyes of the blind opened by Jesus, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. He had seen loathsome leprosy driven from creatures by a mere word. He had seen the lame at the bidding of Christ leap as a hart, and had heard the tongue of the dumb speak. He had stood at the grave of Lazarus, listening to the voice of his Lord as it echoed through the dark and noiseless tomb, and had witnessed the wondrous effect produced—a dead man starting up and coming forth from his burial place in obedience to the command given him by Jesus. Peter from what he had seen and heard, was fully convinced of Christ's Divinity. On a memorable occasion he had distinctly confessed it: "Thou art the Christ, Son of the Living God." He was, moreover, ardently and devotedly attached to his Master. He had for-

saken all things to follow Him, and on numerous occasions had evinced the most affectionate regard for Him. Once, in the presence of all the other Apostles, he had most positively assured his Divine Lord: "Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee" (Matt. xxvi. 35).

Shortly afterwards, when Jesus was seized by His enemies in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter's allegiance to his Master was put to a test. When he saw that resistance was useless and contrary to the will of Jesus, with the rest of the Apostles Peter fled, leaving his Master to the mercy of the rabble. Peter soon rallied from the first panic which had seized him, and with John followed at a distance the mob that was hurrying the Savior to the tribunal of Caiphas. No sooner had he entered the palace of the high priest than he was ill at ease and feared for his own safety. No doubt there was reason for Peter's uneasiness. Three different persons had at different times accused him of being a follower of Jesus, the Prisoner. The Apostle, however, denied the truth of these charges. Blinded with rage and terror, he with oaths and curses declared: "I know not this Man." Devoted, magnanimous Peter,—the man of bold and high resolves,—had denied his Master.

Let us for our instruction, my brethren, seek an explanation for Peter's fall. How did it happen that one who had been so fearless could become so cowardly; that one who had been so devoted to Christ could be guilty of such treachery? The answer is not far to seek. In the first place Peter had too much confidence in himself. Self-confidence is often the first step toward ruin. There can be no question but that Peter really loved Jesus. This is apparent from every page of the gospel history. That his devotedness to Christ was sincere, our Savior's treatment of him makes evident. The praises and the rewards bestowed upon him by Jesus are decisive. Our Divine Lord could not have applauded and

rewarded affected faith and hypocritical zeal. To one who like our Savior had experienced so much of human ingratitude, indifference, slowness of intellect, and positive unbelief, how consoling must have been Peter's profession of faith in His Divinity, as well as his indignant refusal to be classed with those other Apostles, about to deny their Master, and his promise to follow Christ to prison or even to death itself. How satisfactory too, was Peter's bold stand in the garden when he interposed his single sword between his Lord and an armed multitude. We cannot recall these incidents without warming towards Peter. We admire his firmness and courage and, despite the prophecy of Our Blessed Savior, we can hardly help hoping that Peter's resolution will support him to the end, not considering that the very confidence which the Apostle placed in himself was the main source of his downfall. "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled."

If, my brethren, real ground for self-confidence ever existed in a creature, it existed in the case of Peter, yet he had no sooner confided in himself than he fell, and fell as much below the other Apostles as he had boastingly raised himself above them. They in their weakness deserted Christ; he with all his reputed strength denied Him. Christ, in forewarning Peter of his approaching fall, had also pointed out the means by which it might have been prevented. These warnings self-confident Peter neglected. With the example of Christ before him and with the Savior's solemn injunction: "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation," sounding in his ears, he had weakly yielded to the inclinations of nature, and had given to sleep precious moments during which he should have been fortifying himself for his coming trial. The grace for which he had not asked he, of course, did not receive, and being destitute of grace, he was powerless to withstand the feeblest enemy.

This is the history of thousands. They can trace their falls to neglect of prayer. The Christian who is not a man of prayer may expect to fall,—may calculate with the utmost certainty upon growing careless and indifferent about all that concerns his spiritual affairs. If you wish examples to substantiate this statement you have but to look about you. No doubt there are many amongst your acquaintances who have imitated the sin of Peter, because like Peter they neglected prayer. Morning after morning they arose from their bed of sleep to enter upon their daily toil, and night after night retired for rest with never a thought of their Father in heaven. During their hours of work the same indifference to their souls' best interests is noticeable. Though professed followers of Christ, no one would imagine it from anything discoverable in their conduct or conversation. An entire worldliness, an apparent forgetfulness of God, is stamped upon their whole demeanor. They entered upon a career which led them on to an alienation from their Maker when they began neglecting prayer.

With neglect of prayer they grew more familiar with sin. At first they tremulously approached the line which separates right from wrong. Driven on by passion they crossed the line, intending to immediately return, but around them gathered pleasures, fascinating and alluring. Little by little they were drawn into the meshes of sin. By degrees the world acquired a higher and higher ascendancy over their affections. Thoughts about God and His claims on their love and service, came less and less frequently to their minds; even the glorious image of their Crucified Lord was powerless to recall to a sense of their spiritual condition. This is the history of many who have lost faith. They went on by imperceptible degrees. The chains that bound them were invisible, and the hand that rivetted those chains unseen. Had they, however, in the beginning heeded the voice that warned them of danger, had

they been more watchful, more conscious of their need of Divine assistance; had they looked more frequently to God for guidance and direction, and kept more closely to the feet of the Redeemer, the world and its pleasures would never have gained an ascendancy over their affections.

Peter not only confided too much in his own strength, and neglected the means recommended to him, whereby he might have received needed assistance, but he also rashly exposed himself to danger. Had he remained in hiding with the other Apostles, whilst he might have shared with them the charge of cowardice, he could hardly have incurred the guilt and perfidy of his denial. But he ventured into the company of Christ's enemies. Around him the air was ringing with jests and with laughter at the expense of Jesus, but Peter made no interruption. Far from showing his disapproval of the things that were said against his Master, he kept silent and tried to look as much like one of the enemies of Christ as he could. "Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the chair of pestilence" (Ps. i. 1). Peter denied his Master in act when he heard Him blasphemed without protest. His denial in word: "I know not the Man," might be expected.

What an example is given us, my brethren. How eloquently are we warned to shun dangerous occasions when we see the chief of the Apostles to whom the Heavenly Father Himself had revealed the Divinity of His Son, and for the steadfastness of whose faith Jesus Himself had prayed, thus boldly disowning the Savior whom he so ardently loved. Were you, my brethren, as strong as Peter, if you love the danger, you will perish in it. You know that you have not the strength, the courage, the love for Christ which Peter had. You should for this reason be so much the more cautious. If knowing from experience how fatal has been the consequence of rushing into the occasion of sin, you should venture again,

you are playing with fire, you are trifling with God's grace, and not only are you sure to fall, you are prepared to fall, yea, you are desirous of falling.

It is unfortunately true that the unfaithful Apostle has had many imitators since his day; yet, has many imitators amongst us. You, my brethren, are to be classed as such, whenever you depart from the exalted standard of Christian morality. In the early ages when the Church was under heathen persecution, Christians were required by their persecutors to deliver up their sacred vessels, the paten, ciborium and chalice, as well as any volume of Sacred Scripture which they might have. By giving up these consecrated trusts life was spared them. Sometimes they were led to the lighted altars of pagan worship, and were set free provided they would cast even a grain of incense upon the glowing embers. These acts, apparently indifferent in themselves, were pregnant with an intense meaning. They were nothing short of implicit denials of Christ, constructive treasons against the kingdom of the Son of God. His true servants met death rather than deny Him by so much as this silent homage to the kingdom of darkness by the slightest ambiguous motion of hands or lips.

Such is our probation now. The least act of sin, is louder than the loudest profession of faith. The man who is guilty of impurity; who defrauds his neighbor, injures his reputation, or his business, denies Christ. The passionate man, whose turbulence of temper renders him the dread of his household; the sacrilegious wretch who is not prepared to abandon his predominant passion and yet approaches with known unworthiness the table of the Lord denies Christ. The Catholic who neglects to observe the laws of his Church, misses Mass on Sundays, eats meat on Fridays, or fails to contribute according to his means to the support and spread of God's Kingdom on earth, denies Christ. The man who

curses, swears or blasphemes the Lord's Sacred Name, denies Christ. When Peter wanted to prove that he was none of Christ's, he could not do better than take to cursing. They would not believe his denials, but could not help believing his sins. Nobody belonging to Jesus, they knew, would speak as Peter was speaking. It is, my brethren, one of the strongest evidences of the estimation in which an unbelieving world holds Jesus Christ that it expects cleanness of speech and of conduct from His professed followers, and is astonished if those who bear His Name do things which when done by others are regarded as matters of course. Remember then, my brethren, that every deviation from strict rectitude, every delinquency in moral duty, every departure from the path of holiness, cries out with deep and tremendous emphasis: "I know not the Man. I know not Jesus of Nazareth."

Again, my brethren, conformity to the spirit, maxims, customs, of the world is a denial of Christ. He "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present wicked world" (Gal. i. 4). "The friendship of this world is the enemy of God. Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God" (James iv. 4). How many alas! belong to that great class, of so-called Catholics who pursue the vain and empty things of this world as if the acquirement of these were the object of their existence. They are as equally infatuated with earth's pomp and pageantry as are their non-Catholic friends. They are as ready to sacrifice principle and duty when they stand in the way of public office, wealth, distinction, or pleasure, as are they who lay no claim to the Christian character. In their conversation, deportment, pursuits, there is such a constant reference to things present and temporal as to indicate that they are to be numbered with that multitude which denies the Savior—"I know not the Man. I know not Jesus of Nazareth."

Once more, my brethren, he denies Christ who does not

confess Him before men. We are so situated that we can find no neutral ground on which to stand. Our conduct must either deny Christ or proclaim us Christians. Our Savior sent His Apostles into the world to be His witnesses. "You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8). They were to be witnesses of His Incarnation, teaching, miracles, Passion, Death, Resurrection; of His mysteries and Sacraments; of His Ascension and Perpetual Presence; of the whole invisible kingdom of their Exalted Head. They were to be witnesses by their preaching and suffering, and also by their purity of life. The whole Apostolic ministry, the founding and expansion of the Church throughout the world, its resistless might against all opposition, its universal mastery, over-throwing altars, temples, legions, kingdoms,—all this, was a visible witness for Christ. It proved that His Apostles were the living members of a Living Head; that in them He was still ever going forth with the armies of heaven, conquering and to conquer. They were the witnesses of the true and Only King Who reigns, conquers, and governs in heaven, and on earth.

This is our work now, my brethren. There are at this very hour two opposing kingdoms here on earth,—the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of satan. With one or the other each of you must stand. The Savior has declared: "He that is not with Me is against Me." No true disciple can have intercourse with the world without making known to all around the fact that he is with Christ, that he belongs to Him, believes in Him, loves Him and hopes in Him. Men of business, mechanics, lawyers, physicians, merchants, make known their calling by ten thousand little allusions to it. The faithful Christian too, by his conversations, by the desires, thoughts and expectations to which he gives expression, should disclose a soul that is imbued with the very sentiments

which animate the seraphic host around the eternal throne. If everything about one does not proclaim the fact that he belongs to Jesus, he denies Christ. He cries out with Peter: "I know not the Man." "I know not Jesus of Nazareth."

Awful, my brethren, would be your condition if you have been guilty of denying your Master, but for the consolation afforded you in Christ's treatment of His fallen Apostle. Whilst he was in the midst of an outbreak of denial and profanity, St. Luke says: (xxii. 61) "The Lord turning looked on Peter." There was not a spark of anger in that look. Peter saw in it forgiveness and unutterable love. He saw in it the kind of a Master he had denied and, without losing a moment, he withdrew from the company into which he had rashly ventured to bewail his perfidy in silence and in solitude. You too my brethren, are assured of pardon if, having imitated Peter's fall, you imitate his conversation. That same gentle Savior who in the crisis and extremity of His own suffering, not only heard His Name denied but mingled with oaths and curses, and yet yielded not one moment to the resentment which such treachery might have occasioned, but forgot His own sorrows to throw a look of kindness and forgiveness into the soul of Peter, as the guilty Apostle looked toward Him, has mercy for every sinner who with deep contrition turns to Him.

Bear in mind, however, that it is only genuine sorrow for sin, such as Peter had, which moves Christ's tender Heart to mercy. Throughout his career as an Apostle of Christ he proved the genuineness of his love for his Master by arduous, self-sacrificing labors in His cause, and never thought of his treachery but he wept bitter tears. More than this, he did all he could to make atonement to his offended Lord for his base ingratitude. He had disowned his Lord at the voice of a servant girl, and from thenceforth boldly confessed Him at all times and everywhere. In the hall of the high-priest he

had trembled lest he should be recognized as a disciple of Jesus, and from the moment of his conversion to the end of his life professed himself Christ's Apostle and undauntedly announced His doctrines, despite the dangers, difficulties and persecutions which everywhere assailed him. When he had seen Jesus in the hands of His enemies, he feared lest he himself should be made to suffer with Him, and for the rest of his life gloried in the wounds received for his Master's sake, and was never satisfied until condemned to the very death his Savior had suffered. Such, my brethren, must be the dispositions of every one who has been guilty of denying Christ.

MARY MAGDALENE

THE miracles performed by our Savior during life are convincing proofs of His Divine Character and Mission. Some of these miracles were external and visible; others, internal and spiritual. To the first mentioned He referred as being evidently and indisputably above the power of man when in answer to the question proposed by the disciples of St. John the Baptist: "Art Thou He that art to come or look we for another?" He replied: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again" (Matt. xi. 5). The second class of miracles is also the work of a Divine power. To open the eyes of the spiritually blind so that they can see the glory of their inheritance, to unstop the ears of the spiritually deaf that they can listen to calls of mercy which they had long disregarded, to raise men dead in sin to renewed life, to conquer inveterate prejudices and what seemed to be invincible unbelief, to overcome long established habits of vice, are all acts belonging exclusively to God. These deeds of Infinite Mercy prove as convincingly that Jesus is the Christ, Son of the Living God, as do those other manifestations of His Omnipotent Power,—the curing of the sick, the cleansing of the lepers, the raising of the dead to life. A notable instance of a spiritual miracle performed by Jesus was the conversion of Mary Magdalene. She was indeed a brand plucked from the burning, suddenly by the power and the mercy of her Redeemer saved from sin and from hell. Let us, brethren, for our instruction and encouragement consider for a little while the conversion of this great sinner.

Of Mary Magdalene's early life Sacred Scripture has nothing to say. Tradition tells us that whilst very young she was enticed from home and became the wife of one named Pappus ; that her married life was unhappy ; her husband was jealous of her and finally deserted her ; that she then took up with a Roman officer. How much of truth there is in this tradition we cannot say. We do know, however, that St. John, speaking of her at this time of her life calls her "a sinner," and the word which he uses, coupled with what tradition tells us of her extreme beauty and of her profligacy, as well as the whole setting of the beautiful and touching gospel story about her conversion, seems to leave no doubt as to the degradation to which she had descended.

As the Sacred Scriptures leave us in ignorance concerning the causes that contributed to bring about Magdalene's downfall, so they have nothing to say of the circumstances that led to her conversion. This took place some time before the first notice of her given in the inspired pages. There is no record of it in scripture except that found in St. Mark (xvi. 9) where it is stated that the Savior had driven seven devils from Magdalene. How it happened that she came under the notice of Jesus we have not been told. It is probable she had heard of the New Teacher Who had arisen in Israel. Rumor had carried His Name everywhere. It was common talk that He was going about from place to place healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, sympathizing with the afflicted, and pardoning the guilty.

Magdalene resolves on going to Him. No one else had a word of kindness for her. She was an outcast without a friend in the wide, wide world. But what was this to the consciousness of being a sinner, soon to die ; soon to meet an All-Holy God and be condemned to an everlasting hell. In this state of mind, Magdalene went to Jesus. She mingled in one of those immense congregations which were wont to

gather about the New Teacher whenever He appeared in public. Words of His, such as had never fallen from human lips, filled her soul with holy sentiments; opened her eyes to the miserable condition into which sin had plunged her, and at the same time gave her assurance that even for her, an abandoned woman, there was mercy, yea that at that very moment her sins had fallen from her and she was no longer held a captive by the seven evil spirits who for years had possessed her. By Divine inspiration she realized that He Who had spoken to her and freed her from satan's clutches was none other than the Promised Savior of the world. No one else but He could give her assurance that Almighty God loves all His children, even the guilty; that sin, a whole life of sin, sins of the foulest name, sins which ruin the creature in the esteem of his fellowman and fill his own soul with a dread that leads to despair and to hell, cannot shut Him out from His Heavenly Father's compassion and that He, the Christ, had been sent to find such sinners as she had been, to pardon them and make them fit for heaven.

From the time of the Magdalene's conversion two dominant feelings controlled her soul and shaped her life unto her dying hour. These two feelings were a detestation of past sin, and a love for Him Who had delivered her from satan's power. It was probably but a short time after her meeting with Jesus that she is first brought to our notice. Gratitude to Him whose words had saved her and at the same time to give public proof that she was no longer the loathsome creature she had been, moved her to go to the house of a certain Pharisee with whom Jesus was to dine. In spite of the scoffs she knew would meet her entrance into that just man's house she made her way with amazing courage and, having entered the room where Jesus sat, took her place at the feet of her Benefactor to do what she could to repair the past by devoting to Him the gifts she had so deplorably abused. Those

eyes which had burned with unhallowed fires were blinded with tears. Those tresses which had been her pride; which had lured to voluptuousness hearts formed to serve God fell, dishevelled over her blushing face and ministered to the menial office she delights to perform for her Deliverer. Perfumes which once gratified her vanity were consecrated to Him. Her lips so often profaned by unholy passions were pressed again and again to the Sacred Feet which had brought her the glad tidings of salvation, whilst her heart overflowed with gratitude as she recalled the time when she a poor child of frailty and error, without a single friend on earth, forgotten even by those who were nearest to her or thought of with abhorrence as the disgrace of her family, had gone to Him and found not only a human heart to pity her, but a Divine Redeemer to rescue her from guilt and pollution and an eternal hell.

The self-righteous Pharisee who had invited Jesus to his table was shocked because the Savior allowed an infamous sinner to approach Him and pay Him honor. It was, to his way of thinking, the part of virtue to despise sinners and avoid all association with them. Jesus gently reproved Simon's judgment of the poor creature kneeling at His feet. Though she had been a notorious woman, she was no longer such. Love of Him and detestation of her past had transformed her from a sinner into a saint,—one of the elect of heaven.

From the time of our Savior's public acknowledgment of Magdalene's conversion all the formerly misdirected force of her love was turned by the grace of God to the service of Him Who had saved her from hell. Ignoring her past, now eternally hidden by the veil of Divine mercy, Jesus accepts her without further test of faith as one of His followers. She became a member of a band of pious Jewish women who were associated with Jesus and His Apostles in

their missionary labors. From time to time she retired to the solitude of her old home at Bethany where her brother Lazarus and her sister Martha still lived. Here too Jesus sometimes rested from His labors or sought refuge from His enemies.

On one of these visits of which the gospels make particular mention, He showed His love for the family and His gratitude for kindnesses bestowed upon Him by raising Lazarus to life after he had been four days dead (John xi. 39). On the occasion of His next visit, the evangelist tells us, that He had no sooner entered the home of Bethany than Martha began to busy herself in preparing refreshments for their Guest. Mary, however, had other thoughts, and sat at His feet, eagerly listening to the words that fell from His Divine lips. She felt that whilst domestic duty, such as engaged the attention of Martha, had its time and place out of and beyond which it had no right to go, it was in itself of inferior account and must be subordinated to others of an infinitely superior order. Therefore domestic duty was not permitted to disturb the serenity of her soul, nor to steal from those precious moments those blessed opportunities at the feet of Christ.

When Jesus came into her home it was not as a friend merely, but as the Savior of mankind,—her Savior and her God. She who on a former occasion had poured upon His Sacred Person her richest and her best, would have spared nothing which could in any way have ministered to His comfort. But she knew that He lived not on bread alone, and that her true life was in the words which proceeded out of His mouth. Therefore she chose in all humility to sit at His Feet, with an eager ear to harken to His words, to let the sun of heaven shine in upon the dark places of her understanding, and its dew quicken the affections of her heart. She sat at the feet of Jesus in love, in faith, in adoration, as a sinner,

and as a learner in His august presence, and in so doing Jesus was honored and she was ennobled. Hers was the rarer and higher sort of virtue,—the piety which amidst the world's manifold distractions,—amidst temptations within and without, is always looking unto Jesus and would rather lose all things else than His Love—the one thing necessary. Our Lord commended her conduct in words of unmistakable meaning when He declared: "Mary hath chosen the better part."

The Crucifixion is the next scene in the life of Jesus with which Mary Magdalene was associated. From early morn of the first Good Friday she followed every detail in the sufferings and disgrace of Him who had freed her from sin and given her hope. She hung on the outskirts of that blasphemous mob which crowded the street in front of Pilate's Palace. She listened in horror to the terrible charges that were brought against her Savior. She saw His beautiful Face spat upon and struck by brutal men. She heard the scourges as they fell with sickening thud upon His Sacred Flesh. She looked on with broken heart as He was led out onto the balcony of Pilate's court after the scourging, a tattered cloak about Him, a reed in His hand, a crown of thorns upon His aching Head. She heard Barabbas preferred to Him; the mob cry out: "Crucify Him, crucify Him, His Blood be upon us and upon our children." She saw Him at last by Pilate's command handed over to His enemies, hurried by them to Calvary and nailed to a cross.

With broken heart she took her station at the foot of that gibbet. Every word her Savior had spoken to her re-echoes in her ears; that kind, forgiving look which assured her of pardon lives again in memory as she fixes her eyes on that Ghastly Face, the sight of which had been her happiness. She kept watch by her Savior's dying bed, even during its darkest hour, when the Father withdrew His Presence, and Jesus amidst desolation cried out: "My God! My God! Why hast

Thou forsaken Me?" The angels too had left the Sufferer to His fate, for when He cried out: "I thirst," no ministering spirit offered Him relief. The Apostles likewise were not to be seen on Calvary, nor were the many whom Jesus had raised from the dead, cured in time of sickness or consoled in the hour of trial.

Yet all had not abandoned Him. If by a decree of His wisdom and justice God the Father was not on Calvary when His Son was dying for the sins of the world: if by another decree He had struck with terror the greater number of those who had loved Jesus, there was still one group at the foot of the cross, faithful to Christ to the last and among them we find Mary Magdalene. Though the Tragedy of Calvary had wrapt the world in shadow; though the sun and stars were dead; though awful was the muttering of the earthquake, filling all with dread, Magdalene remained at her post, her thoughts centered on her many sins and the great price paid for her redemption.

Perhaps too as she crouched at the foot of the cross she still hoped for the rescue of her Friend. She had many times before seen Him in the hands of His enemies, yet they were powerless to do Him harm. She had often heard Him declare that at any time He could call to His assistance legions of angels, and probably up to the last moment she looked for these blessed spirits to baffle the efforts of Christ's enemies. As that roar swelled up from the crowd: "If Thou be the Son of God come down from the cross and we will believe," she must have eagerly stared into the Face of Christ, wondering whether or not He would add another miracle to the many He had already performed to substantiate His claims. And above all, when the roar had died away and from the two crosses on either side, from men who because of their misery had a supreme claim on the Friend of Sinners, came the same screaming appeal, Magdalene must have

felt that now at last that Power which had saved her, that Power so evidently superhuman that there could be no limit to its achievements, will vindicate itself even at the eleventh hour, and the nails burst into gems, the cross become a glorious throne and her Friend come down to receive a world's adoration.

Such hopes, if they lived in Magdalene's breast, were crushed as Jesus cried out with a loud voice: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit," and gave up the ghost. Mary Magdalene remained faithfully guarding her dead Savior until His Body was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb. With the heart-broken Mother she saw the door of the sepulchre closed,—a huge stone stamped with the seal of public authority rolled against it; a band of Roman soldiers placed on guard, and then returned to her home to weep unseen over the awfulness of the Tragedy that had robbed her of her Best Friend.

We, my brethren, can have no adequate conception of the awful gloom that Calvary's Tragedy had thrown over those who had loved and believed in Jesus. To all of them it seemed that His ministry had ended in tragic failure. He who had styled Himself "King of the Jews" had, amid the rejoicings and revilings of His enemies condemned by the leaders of the people both civil and religious, convicted by the state of sedition and by the church of blasphemy, betrayed by one of His own intimate disciples, denied by another and forsaken by them all, ended His life upon the ignominious cross. The party He had organized died with Him. The religious movement He had inaugurated had come to naught. There was not, it seemed, in the heart of any, even amongst the most zealous of His disciples, a glimmer of hope that His mission would go on. He had indeed spoken words of encouragement; had assured His followers of an abiding presence, of a triumph over all the world, and of a rising again out of the

grave by which that presence and that triumph should begin. But they had listened without understanding. In the garden of Gethsemane they had forgotten everything, and after the Crucifixion a memory of the promise seems to have been kept only by their enemies.

This will help us understand the scriptural account of Mary Magdalene's visit to the tomb of Jesus on the first Easter morning. All records make it absolutely clear that Magdalene and the women who accompanied her had gone to the sepulchre to embalm the body of Jesus with myrrh and spices; that when they saw the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb there was not a thought in their hearts that this meant anything good, but that the Jews had stolen the body of the Master. Magdalene never imagined that the great mystery of the Resurrection had been accomplished. Troubled in soul she hastened back to the city to relate what she had seen. Though the Apostles deemed her story nothing more than idle words, Peter and John returned with her to the tomb, satisfied themselves as to the truth of her statements, and then went back to the city, whilst Magdalene remained.

The Master whom she had lost had rendered her the greatest of services; had been to her the kindest and truest of friends. Her grateful love had clung to Him whilst living, and how this love prompts her to cling to the spot where in death He had reposed. Whilst standing at the tomb of Christ weeping, she saw two angels clothed in white sitting one at the head, the other at the foot of the place where the Body of Jesus had been laid. "Woman, why weepest thou?" one of them asked. "Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him," she answered. At that moment Jesus appeared to her and asked: "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom dost thou seek?" She replied: "If thou hast taken Him away let me know where thou hast

laid Him and I will take Him away," as if He were hers. These are not the words of His own sweet Mother who had a right to Him alive or dead. They are the words of one who had sinned grievously against Him and whose only relationship was that of a rescued lost sheep towards the tenderest of shepherds. So deep was her gratitude, so plentiful had been His mercy and pardon, that she seemed to have a right to look upon Him as her own. Jesus then made Himself known to her and called her by name.

Though the Sacred Scriptures do not tell us that the first to whom Jesus manifested Himself after His Glorious Resurrection was His Blessed and Sinless Mother, the Church has always by the light and intuition of faith believed this. Who after the Mother of God was the next privileged soul to look upon the Risen Savior? Was it St. Peter whom in preference to all others He had selected to be the foundation of His Church? Or was it St. John, the Beloved Disciple, who at the Last Supper had rested on his Savior's bosom? It was neither of these, but Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils, from whose soul He had washed away in the Precious Blood sins as red as scarlet and beyond all number, that He first showed Himself in the glory of His Resurrection, because she had loved much and because out of her great love she had sorrowed much, and because next after the Sorrows of the Sorrowful Mother, Magdalene's sorrows were the greatest that ever crushed human heart.

Jesus came and stood by Magdalene weeping at the sepulcher; called her by name and made Himself known to her. He then delegated her to go to His Apostles and tell them of His Ascension. It may seem strange that the Risen Savior should not have communicated such an important message directly to those whom He had commissioned to preach His truths. In preference to all others He had chosen them to be His ambassadors amongst the sons of men, to be dispensers

of grace and stewards of the manifold gifts of God. Yet for some wise purpose, the revelation of that mystery which was to close the life of God amongst men and complete the work of the Redemption was delegated to one without commission, one not ordained, one who had been a notorious sinner. "Go to My brethren," Jesus said to Magdalene, "and say to them: I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and your God" (John xx. 17).

With such notices of Magdalene's life, such remarkable testimony to the sincerity of her conversion and to the depth of her love for Jesus, she disappears from the sacred pages. She is brought before us by the inspired historians for a few moments only to assure us that there is love in the Heart of God for every creature,—even for the greatest sinner; that one's vileness and abandonment by the world commends him the more to his Creator's compassion; that the Son of God came down from heaven to save all creatures,—even the most wicked, that no one can be so deeply sunk in depravity that his Savior's eye cannot find him out or his Savior's grace fail in lifting him up.

That same Lord who nineteen hundred years ago went about bestowing mercy on all approaching Him in sorrow, still lives amongst us, carrying on that work of saving souls which had brought Him from heaven. He sits in every confessional anxiously waiting for sinners to come to Him. It matters not how guilty one may be, the same Jesus who pardoned Magdalene will also pardon him. The Sacred Scriptures give us this assurance. They tell us that whilst during life our Divine Teacher spoke severe words against wilful and unrepentant sin, He was most gracious and tender beyond all that could be hoped for towards those who came to Him in heartfelt sorrow and begged His pardon. The same mercy is held out to you, and on the very same terms on which it was given to others. God would cease to be God,—

would cease to be just, holy and pure,—did He not demand that sinners seeking mercy come to Him in sorrow, detesting sin, honestly, truly, sincerely acknowledging their evil deeds, with a firm determination of sinning no more. These conditions were demanded of Magdalene; they are exacted of you. If your conversion be genuine as was hers, you too will hear from your Savior's lips those consoling words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke vii. 48).

THE DAY OF VISITATION

(Luke xix. 41, 47)

THE event brought to our notice in these words of St. Luke, took place on the Sunday immediately preceding our Savior's death. For nearly four years had He gone about, making known the truths of His heavenly kingdom. His missionary career was now drawing to a close, yet no one looking at the outward circumstances of His entrance into Jerusalem on the occasion commemorated to-day would imagine that He was on His way to die. His entrance into that city was far more like a triumphal march, for a rejoicing multitude heralded His approach with shouts of welcome: "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed be He Who comes in the name of the Lord."

In spite of the royal welcome extended Him, the Man of Sorrows paused to weep. He was then on the Mount of Olives. The Holy City was spread out before Him, crowning the opposite heights, strong in its natural position, embraced by its buttressed and turreted wall, studded with palaces, crowded with dwellings of inferior note and, above all, distinguished by that wonderous temple, glistening, as Josephus tells us "like a huge bank of snow covered with gold." The Redeemer knew, however, of Jerusalem's doom and with tearful eyes He made known her coming fate: "If thou also hadst known and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round and straiten thee on every side and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who

are in thee and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation" (Luke xix. 41). These sorrowful words which rang the funeral knell of Jerusalem, present this day to you and to me, my brethren, a most solemn lesson. They tell us that there is for us as there was for Jerusalem, a time of Visitation, a time of Blindness and a time of Judgment. Such is the subject to which I wish to call your attention this morning.

Above all other peoples the Jews had been favored by God. By a covenant entered into between the Almighty and Abraham, and afterwards renewed and confirmed with Isaac and Jacob, the Israelies were set aside to preserve among the nations a knowledge of the one true and only God and to hand down to the ages unborn faith in the Redeemer to come. They were to be by their teaching, by their social, political and religious institutions, and above all, by their exemplary mode of worship, as brilliant stars shining luminously amidst pagan darkness. To keep the Jews in mind of their high vocation, to recall the promises made to their fathers, to admonish and threaten them when God's law had been violated, to keep constantly before them a picture of Him Whom heaven would send in the fullness of time, the Almighty raised up a long line of glorious prophets, amongst this chosen race. These were days of visitation. That they were disregarded, history attests. God's commands were sinned against, from generation to generation; rebellion against heaven's King became a matter lightly regarded from its frequency; idolatry and Baal-worship were practised on every high hill and under every green tree. Punishments by the Almighty were ineffectual in bringing the Jews to a realization of their guilt. Jeremias in sorrow of soul cried out: "Thou hast struck them, and they have not grieved. Thou hast bruised them and they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than the rock and they

have refused to return" (Jer. v. 3). Promises of mercy too had failed to bring about the return of God's people to His love and service. "I have sent to you all My servants the prophets rising early and sending and saying; return ye every man from his wicked way, and make your ways good, and follow not strange gods, nor worship them and you shall dwell in the land, which I gave you and your fathers, and you have not inclined your ear nor harkened to Me" (Jer. xxxv. 15). Kindness and entreaty were also fruitless. "I attended and harkened," says the Almighty in His anxiety for their return, but "no man speaketh what is good, there is none that doth penance for his sin, saying: what have I done? They are all turned to their own course, as a horse rushing to the battle. The kite in the air hath known her time; the turtle and the swallow and the stork have observed the time of their coming, but my people have not known the judgment of the Lord" (Jer. viii. 6).

The greatest of the many acts of mercy on the part of the Almighty for His sinful creatures was the sending of His only Son amongst them. His life, His miracles, His preaching was the last day of visitation for the chosen people. During the three years of His public life He kept constantly before Jerusalem the things that were for her peace. He found her children groaning under political degradation and told them that political degradation does not degrade man; that slavery to sin is the one and only thing that can degrade him. He told men who were looking to the past to no longer look thither and say that Abraham was their father, for God can raise from the stones children to Abraham. They asked Him when the Kingdom of God should come. He told them that the Kingdom of God was within; that they were to begin the Kingdom of God then by each man becoming individually more holy. They complained to Him of having to pay the Roman tribute. He asked for a piece of money and

said: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's," plainly intimating that the bondage from which men were to be delivered was not an earthly, but a spiritual one.

All these and other teachings of Christ were rejected by the Jews. They were rejected first by the priests, who looked upon Christ as an irreverent, ungodly man. They were rejected by the rulers, who did not understand that in righteousness alone are governments to subsist, and therefore when He demanded of them justice, mercy, truth, they looked upon Him as a revolutionist. They were rejected also by the common people, ever ready to listen to any demagogue promising them earthly grandeur. They who on the occasion we recall to-day cried out: "Hosanna to the Son of David," did so, believing He was to lead them to personal comfort and enjoyment. A few days after they rejected Him and demanded His Blood. This was Jerusalem's day of visitation.

It is worthy of notice, my brethren, that about Jerusalem's day of visitation there was nothing outwardly remarkable to the men of that time. Of the coming of Christ into the world few historians of that period make mention. This we can scarcely understand for to us the advent of our Savior is the brightest page in the world's history. To the Jews of nineteen hundred years ago it was otherwise. They had made up their minds that the Messiah was to be a political rather than a spiritual king. He was to make Jerusalem the center of an empire which would hold its own against the legions of Rome. With such notions controlling them, they could not recognize the Savior when He came because about Him there was nothing of power, of majesty or of royalty. He seemed, let me say with reverence, to the rulers of His time to be nothing more than a fanatical free-thinker. They had heard of His miracles, but saw nothing remarkable about them. They heard the doctrines preached by Him, but either

found them hard to understand being full of mystery or rejected them because of the stern, uncompromising morality they taught.

It may be asked whether the ignorance which the citizens of Jerusalem had of Jesus and His mission would not excuse them from all guilt in rejecting Him. It is true, my brethren, there is ignorance which will excuse us before God's throne. Our Merciful Judge will not hold us accountable for lack of knowledge, which He knows to have been beyond our reach. There is, however, an ignorance for which the creature is accountable, since it is due to his failure to make the best of opportunities that had presented themselves. As a man guilty of a heinous crime, whilst in the state of intoxication, is held responsible by the civil law for the deed committed, because he is undoubtedly responsible for getting into such a condition, so God holds us all accountable for ignorance which is due to our own neglect. This was the guilt of the citizens of Jerusalem at the time of Christ. Had they studied the words which the prophets had spoken concerning the Redeemer Whom heaven would send amongst them, they would have recognized in Jesus of Nazareth the One for Whom the ages had been waiting. There was nothing in the life of Christ which these prophets had not foreseen and pictured. They foretold the time when He would appear. They named the family from whom He would take His origin. They mentioned the city in which He would be born. They described accurately the life He would live on earth, and entered into every scene of His bitter Passion. The very journey which we recall to-day, had been foretold by Zacharias ages before Jesus had come down from the bosom of the Blessed Trinity. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold thy King will come to thee, the just and Savior: he is poor, and riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zacharias ix. 9).

Despite the fact that in Jesus all the prophecies were fulfilled, He was rejected by those who knew the sacred pages by heart. He was rejected by the less educated who, although they witnessed His wonderful deeds and heard His heavenly truths, would believe neither His works nor His words. They rejected Him, the pearl of great price. They rejected peace which the world cannot give and Jesus weeps, because Jerusalem's doom was sealed. The time was at hand, fixed in the councils of heaven, beyond which the invitation to mercy and forgiveness should no longer be offered the guilty city. The time of visitation which she had suffered once too often to pass without turning it to her advantage, was gone forever.

The day of Judgment was not long delayed. It was but a few years after the words of Christ had been spoken: "The days shall come upon thee and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round," that the world saw them verified, even to the minutest detail. The siege of Jerusalem, its capture, the burning of its temple and the dispersion of its inhabitants to all parts of the earth, is one of the most prominent incidents of history. That people who had turned deaf ears to the warnings of heaven, who had killed the prophets, persecuted the Savior, put Him to death and at the foot of the Cross cried out: "His Blood be upon us and upon our children," was visited by a punishment without parallel in the history of nations.

In less than forty years after Our Lord's words were spoken, an immense Roman army laid siege to Jerusalem. Unable to effect an entrance into the city, the Commander built a trench around it, determined, if necessary, to starve its inhabitants into subjection. The siege was attended with scenes of carnage, pestilence and famine far more horrible than any to be met with in the annals of human misery. For five months the Jews held out, but at last were overcome.

The Romans on entering Jerusalem butchered without mercy all who still resisted, destroyed the temple and then razed the city to the ground. Titus, the Roman general, a Pagan, on viewing the awful devastation that his army had wrought, declared that he was only the instrument of Divine vengeance. It is estimated that one million one hundred thousand Jews perished during the siege. Ninety-seven thousand were taken prisoners and sold as slaves amongst the different nations. This was Jerusalem's day of Judgment. No wonder, my brethren, that Jesus wept.

God's dealings with Jerusalem, are but images, of His dealings with individuals, in every age and under every dispensation. His aim is to keep His creatures steadfast in His service, or if they have unhappily forsaken it, to bring them back to it again. This has been true of His dealings with each one of you, my brethren. Whilst He is always with you, there have been times in your lives when He visited you particularly, spoke to you, warned you, inspired you, stirred your heart beneath its surface and brought you for a time, at least, in conscious contact with the Infinite and Eternal. This is true of all of you. If you look back over the years that have gone by, you will find that there have been many occasions when Christ visited you. He came perhaps in the guise of a great affliction. You had a happy home. Within its sacred precincts all the joys of earth were concentrated. Death entered and gloom settled where all had been brightness; sorrow came to dwell where joy had reigned. And as all was sad and heartrending about you, One stood by your side whispering words of consolation, and you came forth from that affliction with new strength, with new resolves, with a quietness and peace of soul which resignation to God's will alone can give. You may not have known at the time who it was that had visited you. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, you knew Him not, although you conversed

with Him. Now, as you look back, you recognize the form, you know the voice,—the form and the voice of your Savior.

It may have been in a less striking way that Jesus made His presence felt. It may have been through a book which you had read ; an interior inspiration ; a sermon to which you had listened ; the holy advice of a pious friend ; the good example of an associate ; a Communion fervently made ; a fit of serious sickness ; an awful temptation ; a newspaper account of the terrible and unprepared death with which another had been met, that your Blessed Lord came to you. Such visits were of frequent occurrence with the saints. We cannot read their lives without being impressed at the familiarity in which they lived with God ; how He drew near and spoke to them. This is true not only of His chosen ones of the old dispensation, Abraham, Moses, Elias, Jacob, Job, but it is true likewise of the saints of the Christian dispensation. It is true also in a sense of the humblest of us ; it is true even of the most sinful amongst us. There have been times in our lives, when Jesus appeared, drew near to the soul and wept over it. There have been times when He accused it, made demands upon it, warned it of danger ; addressed it not only in general but particularly, individually.

These invitations must be accounted for. If your Savior visits you, speaks with you, advises you, you have sinned grievously, if you have refused to listen to Him. He gives you special calls and warnings,—you heed them not. He commands you,—you are not prepared to obey just yet,—later on you may,—the next time Jesus calls on you, may be—or if not then, at some other time,—at the end of life, anyhow. For the time being your conscience was thoroughly awakened. You saw in the clearest light, the heinousness of sin and its danger ; you almost resolved to quit sin, you hesitated, postponed conversion—and after such trifling, you dismissed the subject from your mind. Jesus had gone. What

is your crime, but the crime of Jerusalem,—the crime of not knowing the day of your visitation,—the crime of resisting Divine grace, tramping under foot the Savior's Precious Blood. Over you the Lord laments as over guilty Jerusalem: "If thou hadst known and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace." Such was the end of three years of preaching, warning, pleading with the sinful city. Such the awful consequence of her resistance of grace until at last grace forsook her and left her the inheritance of impenitence and hardness of heart which was soon followed by the awful vengeance of her offended God.

In Jerusalem, my brethren, we have an image of a soul which is heedless of heaven's warnings until final reprobation came. God does not desire the death of the wicked. He never ceases entirely to strive with the sinner. He never leaves him altogether destitute of grace, but He is not bound to impart special graces. When He finds that His graces are uniformly rejected; when He meets only a hardened heart and a will obstinately bent on evil, He withholds His graces or gives them less frequently. Meanwhile bad habits increase; sins multiply; the root of evil in the heart becomes deeper and stronger; years pass on in sin and at last death comes—an impenitent death, the death of the reprobate and the lost. Perhaps the sinner dies a sudden death, drops dead on the street or meets with an accident that crushes out his life before he can cry for mercy. He may die at home, surrounded by loved ones, but deprived of his senses and unable to do anything toward making his peace with God. He may die in despair. The devil may bring the fearful catalogue of his crimes before his mind in all their blackness and enormity. He may have a difficulty in overcoming a deep enmity against a fellow-creature; in conquering vicious passion; in restoring ill-gotten wealth, to which he clings in face of death, until his fingers are cold and blue in their last agony.

Memories of bad confessions, sacrilegious communions, broken resolutions will paralyze his will and the poor soul will turn away from the crucifix, turn away from the priest and die in despair. Or he may die in presumption. He may indeed go through the form of confession, may receive the other sacraments and cheat himself into thinking it is all right, when in reality he is a hypocrite, forsaking sin not because he hates it, but because a time has come when he can no longer enjoy it. The sentence of pardon pronounced by the priest is reversed the moment his soul appears before the unerring tribunal above. One of these awful deaths awaits every soul that is now imitating Jerusalem's treatment of her Savior.

HOLY THURSDAY

THE REAL PRESENCE

"The Bread that I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world."
—*John vi. 52.*

MY Dear Friends:—The Blessed Eucharist is the center of Catholic worship; the great sun of our religious system, around which our devotions revolve and upon which they depend for life, for merit, and for signification. Because of it our churches are for us most sacred. We regard them not simply as meeting houses, or lecture rooms, but as the abiding places of God living amongst men. We believe that by an act of His Omnipotence the same Being Who created this universe so full of wonders, Who descended from heaven and garbed Himself in human form, Who extends His power over all things in creation, resides in our tabernacles, under the forms and appearances of bread and wine. We believe that we have with us the same Body that was born of a Virgin; that was nailed to a cross; and that is now glorified in heaven; the same Blood that coursed through the veins of the God-Man, that sprinkled the streets of Jerusalem, and was offered in sacrifice on Calvary's heights for the Redemption of the world. This is the teaching of our Church to-day. This has been her teaching at all times, and everywhere during the last nineteen hundred years. Let us, my brethren, consider briefly some of the reasons why she stakes her all on the truth of this dogma.

Our Blessed Lord at the Last Supper made known the dogma of the Real Presence to His Apostles, in terms which seem to have been particularly chosen with the view of placing His meaning beyond all doubt. Knowing the opposition which this unheard of teaching would meet with from man's

reason, He was careful to express Himself most clearly. It would be impossible to find in the whole range of language any other set of words which could convey the dogma of the Real Presence with a greater degree of strength and perspicuity than do the words used by Jesus: "This is My Body," "This is My Blood." More than this, my brethren, He had worked that astounding miracle of feeding five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fishes, in order to prepare His followers for the acceptance of the most wonderful doctrine to which He would ask them to give the assent of their minds. All who witnessed this act of Omnipotence were filled with reverence for Christ, and He took advantage of the favorable impression which His miracle had produced to tell them of a still more wonderful food which He had yet to bestow: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you" (John vi. 27). The Jews heard with astonishment this promise of a food which was to endure to life everlasting; they doubted, however, that it could be superior to the manna which their fathers in the desert had received from heaven, and they asked Christ for a sign,—a miracle,—in proof of what He had said. Jesus replied by insisting on the necessity of their having faith in Him, and reminding them that the manna, though received from heaven, could after all produce no other effect than that of ordinary food. He proceeds: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world" (John vi. 51).

On the occasion when Christ spoke these words, promising to bestow upon His creatures a food that would strengthen their souls unto everlasting life, He was listened to by Jews who followed Him out of curiosity or perhaps through malice; by disciples who believed in Him and loved

Him; by Apostles whom He was preparing to take up the work of converting the world to Him. They all heard Him declare: "Amen, amen I say unto you: except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood you shall not have life in you" (John vi. 54). Their knowledge of the language in which the Savior spoke would not allow them to give to these words any but a literal interpretation. They knew that the expression "to eat one's flesh" when taken figuratively meant to backbite, to slander, to persecute, and they could not believe that Christ commanded such treatment of Himself by them under pain of eternal damnation. Consequently these three classes understood Our Lord's words literally; understood Him as promising to give His Body and His Blood as nourishment to His followers, and He acquiesced distinctly in this interpretation.

First, the Jews understood Him literally, for immediately, the gospel states, they "strove among themselves, saying: how can this man give us His Flesh to eat?" (John vi. 53.) Our Savior knew the interpretation which they had given to His words and the consequent perplexity of mind which had overcome them. On occasions when His statements had been misunderstood, He explained Himself, and so He would have done on this occasion had His words been misinterpreted. Far from telling His Jewish hearers that they had given a wrong meaning to what He had said, He on the contrary confirmed their interpretation by repeating His teaching again and again. He used, if possible, stronger and clearer language; He added the solemnity of an oath and assured them that their eternal salvation would depend on the eating and drinking of His Flesh and Blood. "Then Jesus said to them: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life and I will raise him up on the last

day. For My Flesh is meat indeed and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this Bread shall live forever" (John vi. 54).

In these words Christ did not, it is true, explain the manner in which all this would be accomplished, but it was not in the power of language to express more clearly His intention of giving His creatures His Real Flesh to eat and His Real Blood to drink,—that Flesh and that Blood which He declares in the most positive manner to be food and drink not merely in figure but indeed—that is in truth and in reality.

Secondly, the disciples who believed in Jesus and loved Him understood Him literally. Like the Jews they too were scandalized at the wonderful promise to which they had listened, but expected some explanation to follow which would make the Master's teaching appear in a more satisfactory light. When, however, they heard Him repeat Himself in terms that left no doubt whatever of His desire to be understood literally, believing the fulfillment of His promise to be impossible, they from that hour abandoned Him; "went back and walked no more with Him" (John vi. 67). Jesus attributed their departure not to a mistaken interpretation of His words, but to downright unbelief: "There are some of you believe not" (John vi. 65). He saw those disciples who had flocked to Him to hear words of eternal life take offense and leave Him. He knew the consequence of forsaking Him, yet He said not one word in explanation of the teaching against which they had protested.

If the understanding of His words according to their plain and obvious signification had led them unguardedly into error, it was the duty of the Savior to explain Himself.

Common justice demanded that He remove the occasion of eternal ruin which He had placed in their way ; that He speak to them in a manner which they could understand, and tell them that they had made a mistake in interpreting His words ; that the food of which he had spoken, though much more wonderful than the manna which fell from heaven to feed their fathers in the desert, though in truth a pledge of eternal life to those who receive it worthily, and even though dignified by the name of His Body and His Blood, is in reality nothing more than a morsel of bread and a cup of wine. Had Our Lord meant to have His words so understood, and not only failed to correct His hearers when they had understood Him literally, but on the contrary had by a more forcible repetition of the same language perpetuated the delusion, confirmed the error, and caused those who had believed in Him and loved Him to turn their backs upon Him, and to plunge into the gulf of ruin with the awful sin of apostasy upon their souls, He would be justly considered the immediate cause of their unbelief and of their eternal damnation. This is the awful position in which opponents of the Real Presence would place the Son of God.

Thirdly, the Apostles, understood Christ literally. They had been present during the entire instruction which their Master had given on the wonderful Food He intended bestowing on the world. They had heard the Jews debating among themselves and asking : "How can this man give us His Flesh to eat?" They had witnessed the apostasy of the disciples who had abandoned their Lord because said they : "This is a hard saying and who can hear it?" They understood too that the incredulity of the Jews and of the disciples arose from a conviction that Christ had made a promise which they deemed it impossible for Him to keep, that of giving them His Real Flesh to eat and His Real Blood to drink. Yet when the Divine Teacher turned to these Apos-

bles and asked: "Will you also go away?" Peter in the name of all made answer: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life and we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (John vi. 68). Thus those very words which had been to others an occasion of scandal are declared by the Apostles to be the words of eternal life. Without the slightest hesitation, without inquiring how they are to be accomplished, they believe these words of Christ, the Son of God.

Remember, my brethren, that these Apostles were privileged souls, to whom it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, to represent the Savior here on earth, and to continue after His Ascension the mission which He Himself had inaugurated. Jesus could not leave these chosen teachers in doubt or in error regarding the most important of the doctrines He desired taught at all times and everywhere in His Church. It is therefore beyond question that the Apostles in understanding Christ literally, as we Catholics understand Him, understood Him correctly, understood Him as He wished to be understood, and that the wonderful food which He then promised was to be nothing less than His Real Body and His Real Blood.

It was on the eve of His Crucifixion that Christ fulfilled the promise of giving His creatures a new food which would prepare them for eternal life. Whilst He was celebrating with His Apostles the paschal solemnity of the Jews, He "took bread, blessed, and broke and gave to His disciples and said: 'take ye and eat, this is My Body'" (Matt. xxvi. 26). "And taking the chalice He gave thanks and gave to them saying: 'Drink ye all of this, for this is My Blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins'" (Matt. xxvi. 27).

Let any unprejudiced Christian calmly and dispassionately ponder over these words. They are the simplest, the

clearest, that could possibly be used. Christ gave no explanation of them, for they needed none. He who had said "Let there be light," and light was made, says with the same simplicity, sublimity, and majesty: "This is My Body." "This is My Blood." Our Savior was speaking to His Apostles. He had selected them to be the teachers of mankind. In a short time He would give them the most important commission ever entrusted to creatures: "Go ye forth and teach all nations. Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," and He must have been careful lest they should fall into any error concerning His teachings. Therefore He spoke to them as plainly as possible. He declared to them in unmistakable language that the substance He was giving them to eat under the appearance of bread was not bread but His Own Body, the very same Body which was to be delivered for them (1 Cor. xi. 24); that what He was giving them in the cup to drink, although it looked like wine and tasted like wine, was not wine, but His own Blood,—the very same Blood which would be shed for the remission of sins (Matt. xxvi. 28).

The Apostles were not surprised at this act of Christ. They knew that He who had revealed this mysterious dogma was invested with Omnipotence. Often had they seen Him change the settled laws of nature by a single word. On a stormy sea they had heard Him command the angry waves to be still, and had seen Him instantly obeyed. They had heard Him say to a sick woman: "Thou art delivered of thy infirmity," and immediately she was restored to perfect health. They were standing near when He addressed Lazarus putrifying in the grave: "Lazarus come forth," and his corpse arose before them in all the vigor of life and health. They had been present at Cana, when He changed water into wine, and now they could not doubt that it would be equally possible for Him to change wine into blood, or to destroy the sub-

stance of bread and to substitute in its place and under its appearance His Own Body. They believed that the same Power which had wrought so many other prodigies in their presence was capable of effecting the wonderful change which His words spoken at the Last Supper indicated.

From this conclusion, there was no honest escape. The Savior's words would admit of no other interpretation than that the inestimable Treasure He was then bestowing was His Real Body and His Real Blood. It would not have been possible for Jesus to have employed language more calculated to express a Real Presence, or less calculated to express a figurative presence, than those words used by Him: "This is My Body," "This is My Blood." These words are so clear that of their meaning there can be no doubt. Luther himself declared he could never get over them, although strongly inclined out of hatred for the Pope to deny their legitimate meaning. Men may dispute about the possibility or impossibility of the Real Presence; they may set up the standard of feeble reason in opposition to Divine Faith, but with all their ingenuity and sophistry they can never wrest from the words spoken by Christ at the Last Supper their real meaning: they can never prove that "This is My Body" signifies: "This is not My Body. It is nothing more than its emblem—its figure—its memorial."

Our Lord at the Last Supper having changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood, empowered and commanded the Apostles to do what He had done: "Do ye this in commemoration of Me," and from that moment the Blessed Eucharist became a reality in the Church, to remain until the end of time, not only as a commemoration of the Savior's Passion and Death, but as a source of strength to souls hungering after eternal life. There has never been a moment in the history of the Catholic Church when this doctrine of the Real Presence has not been accepted. The Apostles in carry-

ing out their Master's command: "Go ye forth and teach all nations; teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," taught it to their converts, as Jesus had taught it to themselves.

St. Paul likewise made known this great dogma to those whom he was instrumental in bringing into the Church of Christ. In a letter written to the Corinthians he recalls what he had previously taught them, and begs them to live as faithful followers of Christ. In this letter he not only relates the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, but also makes mention of the dispositions necessary to receive the Holy Eucharist and of the dreadful consequences of a sacrilegious communion. He declares (1 Cor. xi. 29) that he who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks damnation to himself, not for eating a morsel of bread in memory of Christ, but for not discerning the Body of the Lord.

In spite of the teaching of St. Paul; in spite of innumerable passages with which the writings of the early fathers abound, some will tell us that the first Christians, who naturally would be the best judges of the meaning of Christ's words and the best witnesses of the doctrine taught by Christ's Apostles, did not believe in the Real Presence. For argument sake, let us grant for one moment that those who had received their faith immediately from Christ's Apostles believed the Eucharist to be nothing more than bread and wine. No one acquainted with history can deny that there was a time when belief in the Real Presence, such as we Catholics hold to-day, was universal. How is the change in belief to be accounted for? If it took place, as some say it did, it must have been with the knowledge and consent of all.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper has always been considered the most important part of public worship in the Christian Church. It was a rite in which every member considered himself personally concerned, since each one was not

only invited but in the most positive manner commanded to attend the Lord's Banquet. It is reasonable to believe, therefore, that every one must have been well acquainted with the teaching of the Church on a matter of such great importance, and that the slightest innovation would be instantly detected and opposed. If the Christians of the early Church were told that what they had hitherto been accustomed to receive as bread and wine, they should henceforth adore as their Savior and God, judge of the surprise, the horror and the indignation which such a proposition would meet with. There never has been an innovation in matters of faith, as history will prove, which was not opposed in its very infancy with all the warmth of religious zeal.

It was therefore quite impossible for the doctrine of Christ's Real Substantial Presence in the Holy Eucharist,—a doctrine so hard for the human mind to accept, a doctrine in direct opposition to our passions, our prejudices and to the concurring testimony of all our senses—to have been substituted, as they say it was, for that taught by the Redeemer and His Apostles, from one end of Christendom to the other without meeting in its progress a most obstinate and violent hostility. Yet, search the records of the ages, and you find no trace of any such opposition. We learn from history that when Berengarius, in the eleventh century, assailed the doctrine of the Real Presence, all Christendom rose up against him. His novel teaching was condemned in six successive councils during his life and in as many more after his death. If we are given a precise account of this attempt to introduce a doctrine more easy of comprehension than that which had been previously believed, why is there no historical record of the difficult change, which they say took place from belief in the figurative presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist to belief in His Real Substantial Presence? When did this change occur? Where was it inaugurated? Who was its author?

How did it happen that the whole Catholic world,—popes, bishops, clergy and laity,—passed from one belief to the other, without one congregation, one council, one solitary theologian protesting against so great an innovation, or committing to writing one trace of so momentous an event? Because, my brethren, no such change in this important point of doctrine ever took place. The belief of the Catholic Church to-day on the Holy Eucharist is the same belief that was defined by the Council of Trent in 1545; by the Council of Florence in 1438; by the Council of Lateran in 1123; by the Second Council of Nice in 787; by the Council of Ephesus in 431; by the First General Council of Nice in 325, and this first council but defined what had been accepted since the commencement of Christianity, from that auspicious moment when the Son of God, at His Last Supper said: "This is My Body," "This is My Blood."

The records of the first centuries prove beyond possibility of honest doubt that the primitive Christians were agreed in understanding the words spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper as we Catholics understand them to-day. Let me quote in support of this statement from a non-Catholic, a famous patristic scholar of the Church of England, the Reverend Dr. Pusey, one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement. "I have gone through every writer who in his extant works speaks of the Holy Eucharist from the death of St. John to the Fourth General Council A. D. 451. I have suppressed nothing. I have given every passage with context. There is no room here for any alleged corruption. All the earliest Fathers state the doctrine of the Real Presence—all agree in one consentient exposition of Our Lord's words: "This is My Body," "This is My Blood." The Confessions of the Romish, Greek and earliest Protestant Church Confessions are here essentially one. And if this Consensus of Universal Christendom, this sure belief of all the Christian centuries amounts to noth-

ing in the exposition of so cardinal a doctrine of the Scriptures, what assurance can we have as to any Christian article?"

The history of the Church supports these statements of the learned Dr. Pusey. It proves that, contrary to the assertions of some, belief in the Real Presence in the first centuries was universal; that for more than one thousand years no one thought of calling it in question; that the first to attack it was Berengarius in the year 1050 and that he afterwards admitted his error, retracted it and entered a monastery where he died begging pardon of God for the scandal he had given. This error of Berengarius was resuscitated in the sixteenth century by the leaders of the Reformation, and thus has come down to the present day. Around us are millions of Christians, members of the various Protestant Churches, disagreeing in their different articles of religious belief, but all agreeing in their rejection of the dogma of the Real Presence as taught by the Catholic Church. In their opposition to this doctrine they are most persistent. On other disputed questions they are open to conviction,—on the Real Presence they are deaf to argument. They will admit with us that truths incomprehensible to the human mind, when revealed by an All Wise Teacher, must be accepted by creatures; that as God Himself is a mystery to man, in his present, imperfect state, so the religion by which He is adored must be necessarily mysterious; that the mysteries which Christianity proposes exalt and dignify religion, and that it is the glory and merit of Divine faith to believe on the authority of God what it neither sees nor comprehends. Following these principles, they readily accept the dogmas of the Catholic Church on the Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption of the world by the Son of God, although these revealed truths are beyond the comprehension of created intellects.

When, however, Christ's Real Sacramental Presence becomes the subject of their inquiries, reason revolts; the

dogma is declared to be absurd, and this simply because it is incomprehensible. They do not consider it unreasonable to believe that the Lord of all glory became man; that He lived a most bitter and painful life; that He was buffeted, spit upon and scourged; that His Body was nailed to a cross, and that, although He was God, He closed His eyes in death. Strange inconsistency! They refuse to believe that the God who died for them would, did or could bequeath them His Body and Blood as a memorial of His Death, as food for their souls, as an enduring pledge of future glory. They believe that the Body of Christ walked on the sea; was transfigured on Thabor; passed through the sealed tomb over which His enemies stood guard; entered the room where the Apostles sat, the doors being closed and yet consider it unreasonable to believe that Body present under the species of bread and wine. Remind one of them of the words spoken by Christ at His Last Supper and he will answer: "True, the Savior said to His Apostles: 'This is My Body,' 'This is My Blood,' but I do not believe He meant what He said. I do not believe His love for us is so great, that it prompted such condescension as His dwelling sacramentally amongst us. I do not believe He had power to do that which his words seem to imply, and my only reason for doubting His power is that its mode of operation is unintelligible to me."

Such, my brethren, is the reasoning of many Christians of our day on the Real Presence. We could understand such attitude on the part of those who reject the Incarnation, who deny the divinity of Christ, and who see in Jesus only a great and good man, imbued no doubt with the spirit of God, but yet in every sense a creature, but this attitude is inexplicable when assumed by Christians who profess to believe Jesus Christ to be the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity and, as St. Peter called Him, "the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Whoever accepts these fundamental Christian truths, logically

forfeits all right to reject the Real Presence on the score that it is incomprehensible. Once one admits that the Eternal Word bridged the chasm between Creator and creature, to identify Himself with the latter; that the Divine became human; that God really took up His abode in the womb of the Blessed Virgin,—he enters a region wherein he cannot consistently be astonished or even surprised at any fresh development of heavenly love towards earthly men. The Blessed Sacrament is after all only the Incarnation perpetually present. It is no greater strain in our finite intellects to believe that the Word *is* made flesh and abides in our tabernacles, than to hold with St. John as do many non-Catholics as well as we, that “the Word *was* made flesh and dwelt amongst us.”

By the grace of God, you, my friends, are not to be classed with the many who believe Jesus to be the Savior of the world and yet when there is question of the Blessed Eucharist reject the plain and obvious meaning of their Lord’s words because the truth proposed to them is above their comprehension. You are not to be numbered with that unbelieving multitude which nineteen hundred years ago turned against Jesus when He promised to give them a food which would be none other than His Own Flesh because they could not understand the possibility of this promise being fulfilled. You are not amongst the many who cried out: “This is a hard saying and who can hear it?” Nor do you ask with the Jews: “How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?” By Divine light you recognize Jesus dwelling under the sacramental species that He may be food for your hungry souls, drink for your thirsty hearts; the source of comfort in affliction, light in darkness, strength in weakness, hope in despondency, as well as pledge of eternal life. He Who cannot deceive you has declared: “He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him and I will raise him up on the last day.”

THE DOLORS OF MARY

THE Blessed Mother is, and always has been, a forbidden subject in non-Catholic pulpits. Other holy women of scripture are admired and praised and held up for imitation. The wisdom and resistless energy of Debbora, the prophetess (Judges iv. 4) ; the undying faith of Anna, mother of Samuel (1 Kings ii. 21) ; the self-forgetting loyalty of Ruth (Ruth i. 4) ; the heroism of Judith, Savior of her people (Judith viii. 8) ; the many virtues which adorned the life of Sara, the faithful spouse of Abraham (Gen. xvii. 15), as well as the words and the deeds of the women of the gospels, have countless tributes paid to them, yet Mary the Mother of Jesus is forgotten. Her name, her virtues, her privileges are seldom, if ever, mentioned in churches claiming to be Christian. Our holy Church on the contrary has at all times been mindful of Mary's claim on the consideration of all who love her Son. Even during these days of sorrow when the sufferings of Jesus are brought prominently before the attention of her children, she is anxious that we do not forget Mary's part in that awful Tragedy which took place nineteen hundred years ago on Mount Calvary. She sets aside one day of Passion-tide for the consideration of the Sorrows that came into the life of Christ's Mother. This is the subject which we are to study this evening.

If, my brethren, we seek an explanation for the fact that our Creator has made suffering on earth a condition of sanctity, and a preparation for happiness in the world to come, we will find it in the great mystery of the Incarnation. The law of the Incarnation is a law of suffering, although not necessarily so. Whilst a word, a tear, a look, an act of the will on

the part of the Redeemer would have sufficed to reconcile sinful man with his offended Creator, it was not God's pleasure that in this manner the human race should be freed from the penalty attached to Adam's transgression. In His infinite wisdom the Almighty decreed that it should be by pain and blood; by unutterable anguish of soul and death on a cross that man's redemption would be brought about. In accordance with this plan it happened that the whole life of God made Man, from His infant wail in the manger until His last gasp on Calvary, was one of continual suffering. His awful Crucifixion was in no sense a mystery disconnected from the rest of His life, but on the contrary its becoming close.

This same law of suffering imposed by Almighty God on His Eternal Son has likewise been imposed on each and every one who belongs to Christ. The Apostles who left all things to follow Jesus did so carrying a cross. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt. xvi. 24), were the conditions on which they had been accepted as members of the Apostolic band. The same law of suffering has environed the martyrs of every age. Their passions have been living shadows of the Great Passion, and the blood they shed mingled its kindred stream with the Precious Blood of their Redeemer. So it is in a measure with all the elect. They must stand at least within the fringes of Calvary's shadow before being permitted to participate in the merits of Calvary's Sacrifice.

There has been no exception made to this law, my brethren, not even of her who was the fairest of the daughters of Eve; who even amongst the loveliest and saintliest was "as a lily amongst thorns." She was exempt from the corruption of Adam's race; free from Original Sin in her conception; had never offended her Creator by the slightest transgression and it would seem to our limited understandings

as though God should decree that she throughout her whole life would be exempted from suffering,—sin's penalty; that her own Most Loving Son in the fullness of His love would bless her life on earth, so that a cloudless peace, a ceaseless rapture of soul here would have preceded her glory in heaven. No doubt, my brethren, all this might have happened. The Feast of the Seven Dolors which we celebrate to-day reminds us that it did not happen; that, on the contrary, Mary, Mother of our Savior, the glory of the human race, the one nearest to God by her stainless purity and her inconceivable, ever-increasing holiness was so afflicted throughout her life as to merit the title of *Queen of Martyrs*.

It has been said that if all the sufferings of all who have ever suffered were united they would not equal the sorrows that filled the aching heart of Mary. St. Bridget was told by an angel that had not our Savior miraculously supported His Mother under her many trials, it would have been impossible for her to have lived through them. The reason Mary suffered more intensely than any other creature is that she had received human nature in its most perfect, most pure and most beautiful form. As it is the tree that rears its head the highest that feels most the fury of the storm so it is the soul that is largest and most exalted that has the greatest capacity for suffering. The nearer one approaches perfection, the more sensitive he becomes to evils, pains, afflictions and sins which surround him on earth. Mary's was indeed the gentlest, noblest, purest spirit that ever dwelt in human breast; it had in consequence a capability of suffering, a cognizance of surrounding evils, an exquisitely strung susceptibility to sorrow such as the soul of no other creature could have.

Whilst the Sorrows of Mary began in the first days of her holy maternity and continued without interruption until her Assumption into heaven, the Church has seen fit to select

and set aside seven events in Mary's life for our special remembrance and devotion. The first of these was the Presentation of Jesus in the temple when the young mother heard the aged Simeon declare: "This Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce" (Luke ii. 34). Mary left the temple with her Child. Her life could never be the same again. A future full of terror was before her as the shadow of a cross hung over her Babe. She looked into the face of her darling Boy, clasped Him tenderly to her bosom, listened to the throb of His Loving Heart, knowing that she was raising Him for sorrow and for shame. Every calamity, every affliction that awaited Him was known to her. From the terrible anticipation of approaching evil we, my brethren, are protected. In the ordinary arrangements of Providence the trials, temptations, sufferings which are to come in the years that lie before us are unseen and unknown, so that the happiness of the passing hour is not marred, nor the severity of present sorrow added to, by the gloomy prospects of the future. This ignorance of impending misfortunes which mercifully tempers the severity of present trials, was an alleviation of sorrow unknown to the Blessed Mother of the World's Redeemer.

The Infant Jesus was but a few days old when the all-watchful eye of His Eternal Father, seeing from on high peril threatening His life, sent in the dead silence of night an angelic messenger to say to Joseph: "Arise, and take the Child and Its Mother and fly into Egypt. . . . For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him" (Matt. ii. 13). Without delay the Holy Family left home and friends and all they loved and set out upon a long, trying journey; to travel for days and nights on and on, over river and plain, over mountain and valley, through burning sands and under scorching suns into the land of the stranger;

to dwell amongst faces unknown, to associate with a strange people who abhorred their name and blasphemed their God. We are told that in this foreign land the Holy Family dwelt seven years; that they were often in want, sometimes suffering the pangs of hunger. This was the Second Sorrow of the Mother of God.

The life of Mary was centered in her Son. In Him was all her hope, her light, her comfort, her love. He was all in all to her; her Creator and her Child. There could be no doom more terrible, no pang of heart more piercing, than to be without Him. When she left the temple after hearing Simeon's words, it was with heavy heart, but her Son was left to her. In Egypt, though her life was drear, the presence of Jesus was sunshine to her soul. The dolor of anticipated grief and the dolor of her desolate home had left her the comfort of her Son's company. This comfort was taken from her as we recall in the Third Dolor. On the occasion of a visit which the Holy Family paid to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years of age, by His own Divine dispensation and by no fault of Mary, her Child was lost. For three days the heartbroken Mother paced Jerusalem's streets, scanning the faces of passers by, making inquiries of her Son's whereabouts from all she met. The pangs that tore her soul during these three days of agony were the greater because Mary realized that this separation from Jesus was but a prelude to another and a greater one. She knew that the shadow of the cross was nearing her home; that soon her Son will be lost again, will leave her never to return in mortal life.

The remaining Sorrows of our Blessed Mother were associated with the Savior's Passion and Death. Every incident in that awful Tragedy pierced her heart. Whilst she did not witness the Agony in Gethsemane; was not present during the events that transpired at the trial, condemnation and scourging of Jesus, she was not because of her absence

spared any pain. Nothing happened during this period but what was known to her. All through the years that had gone by since Gabriel announced that she had been chosen to be Mother of the World's Savior, she had been prepared for this terrible hour. Long ago, sitting by the manger, looking into her Child's Face, and out beyond the Nile in days of exile, as well as in the quiet years at Nazareth when she prayed and wondered and grew in love, she was ever mindful of Calvary and its horrors. She had a most perfect knowledge of every detail in the great act that would be consummated there in the death of her Son. She knew the necessity of this sacrifice for the redemption of mankind and the restoration of the glory of God. She knew its consequences in time and in eternity. She saw in the rage of the executioners no accidental outbreak of human cruelty or of diabolical malice, but the execution of a sentence which God's justice had imposed.

It is generally believed that the first meeting of Mary and her Son after His apprehension in Gethsemane took place whilst Jesus was on the road to Calvary, hurried on by the brutal rabble. He was so weakened by the agony in the garden, the long vigils of the previous night and the cruel scourging that He could scarcely keep His feet. Mary sees His lovely Face covered with blood; a crown of thorns crushed into His skull; His limbs trembling under Him; His arms and back opened to the bone by the scourging; the faintness of death, as it seemed already creeping over His whole frame. With a mother's love she pressed through the crowd to comfort her Son, to ease His pains, to wipe away the blood that was blinding Him, to lift the crown of thorns from His wounded Head, but rude hands thrust her back.

Accompanied by Magdalene and John, the beloved disciple, Mary followed her Suffering Son to Calvary, the saddest journey human feet have ever trod, save the one trod by the

Redeemer. She saw Jesus nailed to the cross; those dear hands which she had kissed so often, which times innumerable had been clasped around her neck, pierced with blunt, cruel nails. She saw those feet that never wearied in doing good pinned to the wood. She saw that Sacred Body which she had wrapped so tenderly in swaddling bands, laid bare by the rough executioners to the rude gaze of the blaspheming mob. She saw those garments which she had spun with her own hands in the days at Nazareth torn to pieces or gambled for by heathen soldiers. She heard the shouts of joy that constantly went up from the assembled multitude. She heard the challenges hurled at her Son. She sees in the great mob around her but few who sympathize with her dying Child. Those whom He had befriended in life had forgotten Him. Even those whom He had chosen for His own, those on whom He had poured out the richest treasures of His grace with one exception—had forsaken Him.

A mother's love nowhere shows itself as by the bedside of a dying child. It must be doing something to relieve him. The pillows must be softened; the hair brushed back; beads of perspiration wiped away from the clammy brow; the parched lips moistened; the weak eyes shielded from the light; the bed clothes adjusted that they may not press too heavily on her darling. Such is a mother's love. No mother loved a son as Mary loved Jesus, but in His dying hour she was powerless to afford Him relief. She saw the blood from the crown of thorns trickling into His eyes, but could not reach to wipe the blood away. His lips were parched by fever. How gladly would she have moistened them were it in her power to do so. His swollen tongue cleaved to the roof of His mouth, because of thirst, yet she could give Him no relief. His poor unpillowed head, if it leans back, the thorns are driven in; if it leans forward the whole body drags upon the nails. She would hold it in her motherly arms for

a little while until He dies, but neither for Him nor for her is there to be any alleviation.

Yet in all her agony of grief and sorrow Mary displayed a majesty, a dignity and a strength befitting her who is called the Mother of God. The evangelist (John xix. 25) tells us that she "stood" at the foot of the cross. No fainting, no wavering, no crying aloud is recorded of her. The personification of womanly strength and womanly suffering she "stands" by the cross, perhaps supporting those others of her sex who were with her, companions in sorrow. This was Mary's position during three long hours as beneath the darkened heavens upon that reeling and quaking hill, amidst the roaring of the thunder and the flashing of the lightning she watched her tortured, dying Son, marked the faint and fainter beating of His afflicted and broken heart, saw the pallor of death stealing over His beautiful Face; heard His Voice grow weaker and weaker until in the merest murmur of agony He whispered with His last breath: "It is consummated" and died. This was Mary's Fifth Sorrow.

Shortly after the Redeemer's Death, His Sacred Body was carefully and tenderly lowered from the cross and laid in Mary's arms. Once before resting there it had received the homage of Eastern Kings, now it lays there cold, mangled, bleeding, dead. With careful hand the Heartbroken Mother plucked the crown of thorns from the head of Jesus. With intensity of loving grief she kisses His Sacred Wounds; she adores them; she bathes them with her tears. Well may the Church ask, contemplating Mary in this sad plight, her beautiful Son laying mangled and dead in her arms:

*"Quis est homo, qui non fleret
Matrem Christi si viderit
In tanto supplicio?"*

The last and probably the most excruciating of all Mary's

Sorrows came to her with the Death of Jesus. You who have suffered the loss of a dear one can testify that the darkest hour in your bereavement was not at the time your darling was passing away, for then love had some last act, some last word to receive, some comfort to give, some service to render which for the moment made you insensible to what was passing before you. Nor was the darkest hour when the end had come; when the eyes of your dear one were closed forever, and his face fixed in marble stillness for even then, though you stood by the side of his cold clay, the reality of your loss was not apparent to you in all its awfulness. But when the lifeless remains of him whom you loved as you love your own life were consigned to mother earth and you came back to the family home, found yourself alone deprived of his company and realized that your loss could never be regained on earth,—this was your darkest hour.

The Mother of Jesus experienced the horrors of such a trial. With her own hands Mary arranged in its rocky tomb that Body which was more than life to her. Then came one last act of adoration, one last look on the Holy Face and she parted with her dead Son and went back into the world alone, into such a solitude as never creature knew before. Never had anguish so awful, never had woe so utterly superhuman desolated the soul of creature. This last Sorrow continued for about eight years after her Son's Ascension. It was followed by her glorious Assumption and her Coronation as Queen of Heaven.

Devotion to Mary's Dolors has been at all times popular in the Church of God. It matters not where we turn in history we find the followers of Christ, as we find them to-day, devoutly contemplating the Sorrows which Mary freely accepted from the hand of God when she became a co-operator in His plan for the world's redemption. It is believed that this devotion comes down to us from Apostolic times. Tra-

dition tells us that some years after Mary's death as the Beloved Apostle was still grieving over her loss, it pleased Jesus, accompanied by His Mother, to appear to him. They conversed, at this meeting, we are told, on the Dolors of Mary. This, it seems, was a subject dear to St. John. Mary evidently was pleased that St. John was mindful of all she had suffered when she freely became "the handmaid of the Lord," for tradition tells us that she asked her Son to grant some special favor to those who should keep her Sorrows in remembrance.

He answered that He will grant four particular graces to those who practice this devotion. They will be given the grace of Perfect Contrition for all their sins sometime before death; will have a special protection in their dying moments; the mysteries of the Passion will be deeply imprinted in their minds; and they will have a particular power of impetration because of Mary's prayers in their behalf.

In the lives of the saints we read of many revelations made to God's servants concerning the acceptableness, to Jesus, as well as to His Blessed Mother, of devotion to the Seven Dolors. St. Bridget tells us that she saw in a vision the immense value set in heaven on this devotion. To the Blessed Veronica of Binasco Our Lord declared that tears shed over His Mother's Sorrows are moré acceptable to Him than are those shed over His own Passion. This devotion has likewise received the highest sanction of the Church, since it enters both into the Missal and the Breviary. Two distinct feasts are appointed to keep it before the minds of our people, one on Friday of Passion Week, and the other on the third Sunday of September. The Rosary of the Seven Dolors has been highly indulgenced, as have been many prayers which appeal to Jesus, by reminding Him of the Sorrows of His Mother.

Therefore, my brethren, devotion to the Dolors of our

Blessed Mother should be dear to you. Never should you allow a day to go by without thinking gratefully of Mary because of all that man's redemption has cost her. More than this, by avoidance of sin, by imitation of Mary's virtues, by calm resignation to God's holy will under suffering, and by faithfully practising those devotions in honor of Mary's Sorrows which the Church has approved, you should strive to merit her protection during life and especially at that supreme moment when your soul will be going into eternity. Jesus in His dying hour would have Mary near by. It was then and there He appointed her to be our Mother. There is not one of us but hopes for her maternal care when the final struggle comes. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of death," is our oft-repeated prayer. Let us, my brethren, by devotion to Mary endeavor to merit the privilege of having her present to help us in our helplessness, when all things else will be useless, in that moment of unutterable import to each of us.

GOOD FRIDAY

THE PASSION

IN response to the invitation of your Holy Church you, my brethren, have gathered here this evening to witness the closing scene in that wondrous drama which had opened with the angels' hymn. You left your homes and earthy cares that here in the presence of your Dying Savior you may reflect for awhile upon that act in the plan of the Redemption which above all others displays the love of Almighty God for us, His sinful creatures. No subject is so worthy of study. Let us then, you and I, this Solemn Night, enter upon its consideration with an earnest desire to learn something of those all-important lessons which are nowhere else so thoroughly taught as at the foot of Calvary's Cross.

It was about midnight of that same night on which Jesus had sat with His Apostles to celebrate the Pascal solemnity, and had instituted the Adorable Sacrament of His Love, that a band of men bent on some important mission were seen hurriedly leaving the city of Jerusalem. At their head we see Judas, one of Christ's Apostles. Here and there a ray of moonlight, flashing on bright armor, shows a number of his followers to be Roman soldiers. By the torches which some of them carry can be seen faces of bearded men, clad in Eastern dress. These are Jews. They cross the brook Cedron, and hasten on towards a garden in the suburbs of Jerusalem where they had been assured by their leader Jesus of Nazareth could be found. They sought Jesus to make Him prisoner, to drag Him, as a criminal before their tribunals and have Him condemned to death. All the details in

their contemplated attack on the Redeemer had been planned by satan with fiendish ingenuity to stab with most poignant anguish Christ's Sacred Heart. He chose for the traitor one who was a professed friend of Jesus; for the scene of the arrest that hallowed spot where Jesus was wont to go to commune with His Father in heaven; for the signal of betrayal the sign of true, holy friendship: "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He, sieze Him and hold Him fast," were the instructions of Judas to his followers as he approached Christ and kissed Him.

Instantly his orders were obeyed. Jesus was seized, securely tied and, in accordance with a pre-arranged plan, hurried away to the tribunal of Annas, a man full of years, of craft and of cruelty. Annas questioned the Prisoner about His doctrines and disciples, as well as about those with Whom He had been associating during His public career. Failing to bring out any incriminating admission which might be made the ground of a formal accusation before the Sanhedrim, he ordered that the Prisoner be taken in chains to Caiphas, the High Priest. Here every sense of justice was straightway thrown to the winds without excuse or shame. Though the Jewish law laid down a very complete code of procedure in the trying of capital offenses, these requirements were all disregarded in the case of Jesus. The code demanded that a prisoner on trial for his life be given every chance to prove his innocence; that his witnesses be the first to be examined; that before those who were to give evidence for the prosecution should be allowed to testify, they were to be reminded of the solemnity of their position, and enjoined to speak only from certain knowledge, and to affirm nothing on mere heresay. The code demanded also that testimony against a prisoner be subjected to searching scrutiny, and be admitted only when corroborated by the evidence of a second witness.

These just and merciful regulations of the Jewish law Caiphas and his colleagues unblushingly disregarded in the trial of Jesus. They summoned no witnesses for the defense. They allowed none to testify, except those whom they had prepared, to give evidence against the Prisoner. Some of their witnesses accuse Jesus of blasphemy,—a crime according to God's law punished by death. A short time before, they swear, they had sought to kill Him because He had declared God to be His Father, "making Himself equal to God" (John v. 18). They recall another time when He had said still more explicitly: "I and the Father are One" (John x. 30). On this occasion, they declare, they had taken up stones to put Him to death, and when He had asked for an explanation of their attack on Him they told Him plainly: "We stone Thee for blasphemy, because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." The High Priest on hearing this testimony considers that a good case has been made out against the Prisoner.

He feels, however, that the guilt of Jesus would be unquestioned were He then and there in the presence and hearing of that gathering which crowded his courtroom to repeat these blasphemous claims. Starting from the judgment seat Caiphas approached the Prisoner and with all solemnity asked Him in the Name of the Living God to tell them whether or not He be "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed God." Jesus regarded this adjuration as nothing less than a challenge. He considered that were He to keep silent, His silence would be interpreted as a denial of His Messiahship, a dereliction of all His claims, a disloyalty to His Mission and a betrayal of those who believed in Him, owned Him as their Lord and trusted in Him, and so He made instant reply: "I am. And you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark xiv. 62).

These words, my brethren, were spoken in answer to the most solemn adjuration known to a Hebrew. Our Lord knew that for their utterance death would be His punishment. No sooner had they been spoken than He was declared by the High Priest to be guilty of the charges brought against Him and sentenced to die. He then a convicted criminal became, according to custom, the sport of that cruel mob about Him. They vented their hatred of Him with the coarsest brutality, even spitting on His Adorable Face. He was to die a false prophet, and as such they treated Him. They blindfolded Him with a cloth, struck Him with their clenched fists whilst crying out sneeringly: "Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who it is that struck Thee?" Core and his company (Numbers xxvi. 10) had no sooner rebelliously attacked Aaron's priestly dignity than the Almighty opened the ground beneath their feet and sent them down to hell. Oza, a Levite (1 Par. xiii. 10) was guilty of a seeming slight irreverence toward the ark, and the hand of the Lord struck him dead. One word from the lips of Jesus and those menials, making of Him a sport and a plaything, would have perished. But as He had begun and continued, He would end—as self-restrained in the use of His awful powers in His Own defense as if He had been the most helpless of men.

With Christ's conviction of blasphemy and His condemnation to death by Caiphas, a busy and an anxious day for the Jewish leaders came to an end. From early morning they had been occupied in plotting and scheming, hurrying from place to place securing witnesses, preparing and rehearsing testimony to be used at the trial of Jesus. Their plans having succeeded even beyond their fondest expectations, they now retire to their homes for a little rest before the greater triumph which on the morrow would crown their efforts. The Prisoner was taken to a dungeon in the High Priest's palace to be carefully guarded until the following

morning. No tongue can tell, no imagination picture, the indignities to which Our Blessed Savior was subjected during the long dark hours of that night of horror. Every revolting insult, and every mark of contempt which suggested themselves to the minds of those coarse, brutal men who stood guard over Him, were heaped upon the unresisting and helpless Victim.

On the following morning Jesus was taken before the tribunal of Pilate, the civil ruler, that he might approve and order to be carried into execution the sentence pronounced by the High Priest. Knowing, however, that blasphemy, the crime of which their Ecclesiastical Court had found Him guilty, and for which they had sentenced Him to die, would be laughed at by the Roman magistrate, they decided on accusing the Prisoner of plotting against the government. "We have found this man perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar and saying that He is Christ, the King" (Luke xxiii. 2), they said to Pilate. They would have him regard Christ as a seditious plot-monger, an aspirant to the Jewish throne, a rebel against lawful authority, and as an enemy to the acknowledged ruler. Whilst the very appearance of Christ must have rendered these charges ridiculous, Pilate nevertheless listened patiently to the evidence they had to submit in proof of the Prisoner's guilt. Christ's innocence was so apparent that Pilate, after hearing the testimony of their witnesses, declared: "I find no cause, no crime in this Man." Knowing, however, that this verdict would displease the Jewish leaders, he added: "As He is from Galilee take Him before Herod, governor of that province."

Accordingly Jesus, in chains, was dragged through the streets to the tribunal of that wretched debauchee, the murderer of John the Baptist. Herod was the only individual for Whom Jesus had expressed His contempt and abhorrence. Now for the first time He meets him face to face.

Herod, St. Luke (xxiii. 8) tells us, on "seeing Jesus was very glad." He was glad not because he recognized in Him the Great Teacher, the Redeemer, Who could deliver even him,—the guilty king, the adulterous kinsman, the blood-stained despot from sin, but "because he had heard many things of Him" and hoped to see some wonder wrought by Him. He addressed many questions to Christ. Jesus refused to answer these questions insincerely put, and was pronounced a fool by Herod, ordered to be clothed in a white garment and to be taken back to Pilate.

The strategy of Pilate having failed he was to his chagrin obliged to resume the awkward case. He knew that the Jewish rulers were set upon the death of Jesus, but his Roman reverence for justice revolted from the idea of condemning an innocent man. He thinks of a scheme whereby he undoubtedly will be able to save Jesus. It was customary for the Roman governors, with politic deference to Jewish sentiment, to signalize the Passover by granting pardon to a prisoner, allowing the people to name the one who should be made the fortunate recipient of the imperial clemency. Pilate reminded the mob, crying aloud for the Death of Christ, of this privilege which belong to him as their ruler. He told them too that there was lying in prison at that moment a notorious criminal named Barabbas. He was one of those brigands who infested the mountains of Judea; had been taken red-handed and was awaiting execution. They were privileged, Pilate told them, to choose between this murderer and Jesus. "Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas or Jesus that is called Christ?" (Matt. xxvii. 17), Pilate asked them. Instantly the mob cried out: "Give us Barabbas, but let Jesus be crucified." The ruler was surprised at the failure of his plan to save the Prisoner, and at the determination of the mob to put Him to death. He washed his hands before them saying: "I am innocent of the

blood of this Just Man; look you to it" (Matt. xxvii. 24). Instantly in reply the hideous withering, irrevocable curse, "His Blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt. xxvii. 25) rose shudderingly up to heaven, there to be inscribed by the recording angel in letters of flame as the self-invoked doom of a people.

The ruler was yet unwilling to accede to their wishes, and appeals to them as reasonable men, hoping to show them how unjust their demands are. "You have presented unto me this Man as one that preverteth the people, and behold I, having examined Him before you, find no cause in this Man in those things wherein you accuse Him. No, nor Herod neither, for I sent you to him and behold nothing worthy of death is done Him" (Luke xxiii. 14). Here was a complete and absolute declaration of the Prisoner's innocence, and Pilate would fain have concluded: "I must therefore release Him." He quailed, however, before those ruthless faces, and concluded with faltering inconsequence: "I will chastise Him therefore and release Him" (Luke xxiii. 16). Accordingly, he orders that Jesus be scourged. The Prisoner was led into an open courtyard and, according to a private revelation made to St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, sixty strong men were chosen to carry out Pilate's command. They were divided into pairs, and each man was armed with a scourge. Some of these weapons of torture were whips having several thongs, each one loaded with acorn-shaped balls of lead, or sharp pieces of bone. More of them were tough limbs of trees carefully selected for the occasion, whilst others were knotted ropes, studded here and there with steel rowels, which like spurs would cut into the flesh, ringing blood from a dozen wounds at every stroke. No sooner had Jesus been stripped of His garments and His hands been tied securely to a pillar, than the first pair came forward to begin the torture, to them a labor of love. They swung the scourges back

over their shoulders, and then with all their might, brought them down upon the delicate frame of their helpless Lord. Blow followed blow with lightning rapidity until the Blood of Jesus from a thousand wounds ran in streams down His limbs, forming pools on the pavement below. His Flesh was actually torn from His back, His ribs, His limbs, as stroke after stroke cut to the bone. Thus the torture was continued until those two strong men were exhausted, and retire from their terrible labor. Another pair came forward with new scourges and with fresh and vigorous arms. They had been standing by, awaiting with impatience their turn to torture the meek, humble, gentle Lamb of God. They now step quickly forward to continue the work for which they had been selected,—to rain merciless blows upon the defenseless Body of their Lord, to wreak their hatred upon the Innocent and Uncomplaining Victim. This torture was continued until those sixty powerful men were exhausted; until their scourges were sodden and saturated and dripping with the Blood of Jesus. One mass of bruised torn and bleeding flesh, the Divine Victim hangs senseless from the pillar. They cut the cords that bound Him, and He fell heavily to the floor. Death would have then and there ended His torture were it not decreed He should live on that His Sacred Body might yet be racked with ten thousand pains, His Spirit be crushed with shame and anguish, and the chalice of suffering be drained to its lowest and bitterest dregs on Golgotha's height.

Jesus had no sooner recovered consciousness and regained His feet, than He was delivered to the rough soldiers for the maltreatment they were wont to inflict upon unfortunate prisoners. In contempt for His claims of Kingship, they platted a crown of thorns and crushed it upon His Head; placed a reed in His hand as His royal sceptre; threw around His bleeding shoulders a tattered purple garment as

His royal mantle; knelt before Him in derision, whilst crying out: "Hail! King of the Jews." The brutal scourging, and the rough treatment which followed it, coming after all that had gone before,—the anguish of Gethsemane, the exhausting vigils of the previous night and the many cruelties connected with His arrest,—had left Him half dead. In this condition He was led back to Pilate. His pitiable plight touched the ruler's heart. He regrets having ordered the scourging of Jesus, and declares that he himself is innocent of the Victim's Blood. At the same time he is convinced that the condition of misery and of shame and of suffering to which his cowardice has brought Jesus will evoke commiseration from the mob and cause them to relent in the determination to nail Him to a cross.

Never was one more deceived as to the sentiments of a mob. Leading the Bleeding Lamb of God onto the balcony of his house, Pilate shows Him to the rabble below, saying: "Behold the Man!" See what a pitiable object He is,—a mass of bruised, of torn and of bleeding flesh. Is there one amongst you whose heart is so hard as not to be softened at the sight of His wounds? Is there one who will still ask more punishment for Him? Will you not all admit that He has suffered more than His guilt would demand, and approve of His discharge from custody? It was a useless appeal for with one voice that bloodthirsty crowd cried out: "We are not satisfied,—give Him to us and we will crucify Him." It is hard, my brethren, to explain the barbarity of that mob which cried aloud for the Blood of Jesus. There is deep-seated in man's heart a tenderness which causes sympathy to go out from it to those in misery. We cannot stand by and see another tortured. We feel that criminals, no matter how guilty they may be, should be dealt with humanely; that, even the brute animal should not be treated cruelly.

The Jews, however, had no kindly, sympathetic feeling

for Jesus Christ. Nothing but His Death, in the most cruel manner, would satisfy their bloodthirsty hearts. Pilate was anxious to save Jesus, but had not courage to face the ill-will of the rabble. Had he been a man of principle, and not a self-seeking politician, he would have said boldly, regardless of consequence: "This Man is innocent. I have given you every imaginable opportunity to substantiate the charges you have brought against Him, but you have failed to do so. I therefore order His discharge from custody. I dare you to lay hands on Him. He is entitled to the protection of the law, and I will see that He gets it." Pilate took no such stand. Thirst for office, or desire to retain it when once secured, could exert then, as now, a most pernicious influence. Whilst the Roman emperors and the Roman senate cared but little for the real welfare of tributary provinces, still restlessness and insurrections amongst them were apt to raise presumptions against the competency or judgment of the governors. Politicians weighed their interests in the first century as they weigh them in the twentieth. The effects of popular uprisings and tumults were as carefully calculated in the petty court at Cæsarea as they are now in the political circles of one of our large American cities. Could Pilate have saved Jesus without displeasing his subjects and in consequence injuring his prestige at home, he doubtless would have done so. Seeing, however, that it was impossible to do this, he makes a sacrifice of Jesus; hands Him over to the rabble amidst a shout of approval for his action.

The Savior of the World is now in the hands of His enemies. He belongs to them. They have Pilate's authorization to do with Him as they please. They hasten to carry out the program decided upon in their councils before His seizure in Gethsemane. Everything is ready for His Crucifixion. In the mob surrounding Him are several men in charge of a large cross; another has in his care huge spikes

and a heavy hammer. More have ropes and other paraphernalia that may be needed in the Crucifixion. Imagine, my brethren, the condition of your Savior at this moment. He is one bleeding wound, and so exhausted that He can scarcely stand. Yet the heavy cross is laid on His mangled shoulders, and He is ordered to proceed to Calvary.

On reaching there no time is lost. From His Sacred Body they rudely tear His garments, all clotted with blood and cleaving to His wounds. They throw Him roughly on the cross and fasten Him there with huge nails. Then the gibbet is raised and placed in position amidst the applause of the assembled multitude. A few days before these self-same people had awakened the echoes of Mount Olivet with joyous hosannas to the Son of David, now their fickle hearts lay bare their basest and blackest depths, as they surround His cross and taunt and ridicule the helpless Sufferer. Amongst that crowd on Calvary that morning doubtless were many who had received blessings at His hands. There were some from Nazareth, perhaps, who could recall the quiet home among the hills, and the blameless life of Him Whom they knew as the "carpenter's son." There were probably some from Cana of Galilee, who had been present when the water was made wine. There were many who had witnessed merciful deeds performed by Jesus; saw Him restore to life the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus, and the only son of the widow of Naim. These good deeds are now forgotten as they gather about Him; recall the titles He had claimed for Himself,—*"The Son of God," "The King of Israel," "The Christ," "The King of the Jews;"* howl in derision at such pretensions and challenge Him to come down from the cross. Thus dragged on that long weary day, the darkest in the world's history.

At last the closing scene in Calvary's Tragedy arrived. In extremity of agony the Savior had awaited its coming,

tortured by thirst; racked by cramps; deprived by the cruel nails of even the relief of wrigling in His pain. After several hours of horror, such as has never desolated the soul of man, the end came. A ghastly pallor steals over His once beautiful Face; the pulsations of His great Heart are stilled, and Jesus, the Eternal Life, Who had existed from the everlasting years is dead; the most beautiful, the most tender, the most loving, the most holy of the sons of men hangs lifeless on a cross. He has been put to death as a criminal although in Him there was no sin. Well known was His life and none had ever honestly alleged evil in it. His implacable enemies could only declare in their blind hatred that His mighty works had been done through the devil, and that claims which He had put forward were blasphemous. His Roman judge could find no guilt in Him. One of the thieves hanging by His side had asserted as a simple and notorious fact, that He had done no wrong. The centurion in command of the soldiers, who had assisted at His Crucifixion, proclaimed Him a just man, and yet as a criminal he hangs lifeless on a cross. Our hearts go out in sympathy to Him. The story of His betrayal, trial and Death arouses deep, human, fellow feelings within us.

But, my brethren, what gives us a particular interest in the Passion and Death of Jesus is the fact that the Sufferer, betrayed, insulted, buffeted, crucified, arrayed as a mock monarch, with fancy robe and fancy sceptre; upon whose Head a crown of thorns has been crushed; who is challenged and ridiculed by cruel men; Whose Face they spit upon; into whose Flesh they drive the nails, is God the Almighty One. It is not one of the sons of men upon whom His fellow mortals were thus venting their scorn and hate, but Him Who created all things, Who rules all things and Who at the end of time will pass either sentence of eternal life or of eternal death on each creature. He had come from heaven to be man's Savior; to offer Himself in the sinner's place as a sacri-

fice of propitiation to His offended Father. The sacred pages assure us that from the time He had appeared on earth to be Man's Best Friend, He was regarded as an enemy, and rejected as such by those Whom He had come to serve and save. Even at the very moment the angelic hosts were proclaiming His birth as an event bringing glory to God in heaven and peace to men on earth, creatures were beginning to lay snares for their Savior and to dispute His right to the homage of their hearts.

To-day, my brethren, we are called upon to witness on Mt. Calvary the consummation of their years of opposition to Jesus and His Mission. No wonder that nature revolted at the ignominies heaped upon its God: that the earth trembled to its center. No wonder that darkness shrouded creation; that the sun, moon and stars hid their faces in shame. No wonder that the rocks nearby were torn asunder; that the dead came forth from their graves, that an awful gloom hung over Calvary, and that many convinced by such manifestations struck their breasts in sorrow and cried out: "This was truly the Son of God Whom we crucified."

Nineteen centuries have gone by since these scenes upon which we have been meditating transpired. You are asked to recall them today as events of long ago, perpetrated by others, but as deeds in which you yourselves took an active part. Not one of you who has come here this evening to look upon the Face of your dead Savior, but is conscious that he was one of those who nailed Him to the cross. He dare not accept the challenge of standing before the Crucified One, and swearing that he was in no way associated with His Death. According to a law imposed by God on the people of Israel whenever a person had been found murdered, anyone in the community upon whom suspicion rested might be taken into the presence of the corpse and be sworn: "My hands did not shed this blood" (Deut. xxi. 1). There is no

creature who has ever sinned that dare go into the presence of Jesus, hanging dead on Calvary's Cross, and take that oath. Will the impure creature, he whose life, day after day, and year after year, is a continued round of impurity, stand at the foot of Christ's cross and swear his innocence? Will the slanderer, the backbiter, that vile creature whose tongue is as poisonous as fangs of serpents, go to Calvary and remove the suspicion that rests on him, or on her, of having been amongst the brutal rabble that crucified Jesus Christ? Will the unjust man, the man who cheats his neighbor, who steals, who makes a god of his money, who has in his possession what belongs to another, take the oath, swear that he was not an accomplice in that awful deed perpetrated nineteen hundred years ago on Mount Calvary? Will the blasphemer of the Adorable Name of Jesus, swear that he was not one of the mob that went out from Jerusalem, seized Jesus in Gethsemane and nailed Him to the cross? No, my brethren, these sinners dare not go before their crucified Savior and swear: "Our hands did not shed this blood."

Neither can you, my friend, if you have ever been guilty of sin, go into the presence of your dead Redeemer and take an oath that you had nothing to do with His Crucifixion. Were you to do so, His open wounds would cry out against you. You may attempt, as did Pilate, to wash from your hands the Blood of your Savior, but the stain will remain forever. When Jesus hung on the cross every soul from Adam to him who shall darken with crime the last hour of human existence was present. You were all there, everyone of you. You were there in your quality of sinners and you added your strength to the blows that drove the nails into the hands and feet of Christ, and you mingled your voices with that of the blasphemous rabble which taunted and ridiculed and defied the Patient Sufferer. More yet, my brethren, this is what you are doing to-day, every time you commit a mor-

tal sin. Such is the teaching of St. Paul (Heb. vi. 6). According to the inspired writer, the Tragedy of Calvary is being daily repeated. You, my friend, are a party to its horrors every time you fall into grievous sin. Every time you are guilty of impurity or of intemperance, every time you sacrifice truth, honor, virtue or the interests of Jesus Christ for worldly ambition or worldly gain; every time you miss Mass on Sunday or eat meat on Friday, every time you are merciless and unscrupulous, revengeful and cruel, bitter and remorseless towards your fellow man, you are answering Pilate's question: "Whom will you that I release to you" (Matt. xxvii. 17) as did the Jews: "Give us Barabbas! Give us Barabbas! and away with Jesus of Nazareth, let Him be crucified"—"His blood be upon us and upon our children."

Such, my brethren, are some of the thoughts which your holy Church would have brought to your notice on this solemn occasion. She realizes that the mystery of Redemption must ever hold the central and primary place amongst all the great truths of Christian faith, since it is, in one word, the supreme revelation of God's love for His creatures. Previously, signs and wonders had been wrought to attest the desire of the Creator to be known and loved by His children. But beyond all previous mysteries of Divine Power or Justice or Mercy; beyond all the wonders of Horeb or Sinai; beyond even the touching mystery of Bethlehem where the limit of God's love seemed to have been reached; greatly surpassing all these wonders comes to us the revelation of love, which the Eternal Word makes to all without exception from Calvary's Cross.

The first lesson, then, that our holy Church would have you learn this evening from all you have seen and heard is that your Heavenly Father loves you with an infinite love and, reciprocally, that above all persons, all things to be loved by you, is One to be loved, adored, and trusted supremely,

and that is your Blessed Redeemer, your Crucified Savior, Jesus Christ. Secondly, my brethren, there is another lesson that your holy mother would have you master. It is set before you not less clearly in the revelation that is made from the cross than is God's love for you. St. Thomas points out that the cross of Calvary give us a measure with which to estimate the malice of sin. It shows us as nothing else can what sin is in the sight of God. Such, my brethren, is the second message, a Divine communication, more wonderful in all its bearings than the great revelation given to Moses in the burning bush, that your Savior addresses to each one of you from the cross.

He warns you to weigh in God's balance, not in the false measures of men, the gravity of sin, the cause of all His sorrows. He reminds you that He died for your salvation, and asks from you in return for the future a truer service and a deeper love. You can, like the Jews, turn deaf ears to His admonitions. You can, like them, reject His love. It is within your power to seize Him as Judas did and to turn Him over to His enemies. You can scourge Him too; crown Him with thorns; drag Him to Calvary; throw Him on the cross; dig His Hands and Feet with nails and when you have fastened Him securely to that bed of torture, you can taunt and ridicule, defy and challenge your Suffering Lord. He is patient now as He was when in the hands of the rabble that put Him to death. You may go on for years in your sinful career, but the day of Jesus Christ will come. With a soul weighted down by hideous sin you must stand before Him. There will be no escaping that day. Now, criminals often escape human courts. There is many a thief who has never been arrested, many a murderer that remains unhung, but there will be no absentees when Jesus rises to pronounce judgment. You may escape now those who speak in Christ's name and with His Authority. Many make it a practice to

do so. They never attend a Mass at which a sermon will be preached lest their consciences might be disturbed. If perchance it should happen that they are forced to listen to a sermon, especially if it be a Lenten sermon or a mission sermon, when it becomes too pointed they leave the church, but there will be no leaving when arraigned before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. Now, my brethren, is the time to prepare for that judgment. Jesus from His dying bed assures you of His love. With outstretched arms He would gather to-day the children of men to His embrace, begging them to forsake sin, so awful in His sight, and to enter once more into a covenant of love with Him Who came from heaven to be their Savior. God grant that none of you, my brethren, will turn deaf ears to this invitation which comes to all from Calvary's Cross.

GOOD FRIDAY

THE MENTAL SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD IN HIS PASSION

THE sufferings to which Our Savior submitted as the substitute of sinners were numerous, varied and most severe. He was pre-eminently "Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity" (Is. liii. 3). With every form and degree of suffering in which the holy displeasure of God against the sin of man is manifested, He was familiar in so far as such suffering was compatible with His Perfect Holiness, and could say with an emphasis quite peculiar to Himself: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow" (Lam. i. 12).

The external sufferings which Christ endured were of no common kind. From the manger to the cross He was almost entirely destitute of the ordinary comforts and necessities of life. He could say of Himself: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay His head" (Matt. viii. 20). He was, moreover, the object of the most malignant contempt on the part of the upper classes of His day, and of the contumelious abuse of the lower. Blasphemer and demoniac—imposter and madman—glutton and wine-bibber,—friend of publicans and sinners—were terms commonly applied to Him. At the time of His Passion and Death He experienced the utmost intensity of pain of which the human frame is capable. With the external sufferings endured by your Savior from the time of his seizure in Gethsemane until He closed His eyes in death

on Calvary, you are all familiar. Often have you been told of the blows, the scourging, the carriage of the cross, the crowning with thorns; of the nails that pierced Christ's hands and feet and pinned Him to His bed of torture, and of His Death in agony. These sufferings, though most severe, were the least of the tortures endured by your Redeemer. Of far greater intensity was the inward anguish that tore Our Savior's soul. This is the subject I wish to treat for you this evening.

After the celebration of the Last Supper Our Blessed Lord with His eleven Apostles went to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus on many other occasions had spent the night in prayer. No sooner had they reached this hallowed spot than He said to His companions generally: "Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray" (Matt. xxvi. 36). Then taking with Him Peter, James and John, He went to a more retired part of the garden. Immediately "He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad" (Matt. xxvi. 37), and He declared to His attendants: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38).

The sacred writers have labored to describe the awful agony which at this time took possession of the soul of Christ. They tell us that Our Savior first knelt, then fell on His Face to the earth, praying "with a strong cry and tears" (Heb. v. 7) till a bloody sweat burst from every pore of His Sacred Frame and ran in torrents down His Limbs to the ground. Before some mighty and awful vision His soul sank, as it were, and He cried to His Heavenly Father for relief: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me" (Matt. xxvi. 39). Twice from a soul torn with most intense grief went forth this cry for pity, this appeal that if it were possible, if it were compatible with His Father's glory and the world's salvation, the cup of anguish might pass from Him, and twice, with words of meekest resignation, did He

yield Himself to the will of Him with Whom He Himself was One.

Twice did He return to the three chosen ones whom He had bidden to watch with Him in this awful hour of uttermost conflict, and each time found Himself bereft even of human sympathy, unwatched with, unheeded, alone. Yet a third time even while the ministry of a sustaining angel and the blood streaming from His Sacred Body alike bore witness to an agony fast transcending the powers of our common humanity, was the prayer for relief offered to the Eternal Father and again was it followed by the meek resignation of the Eternal Son. "My Father, if it be possible in Thy unlimited power, I beg Thee to devise some way for making Thee the demanded satisfaction and saving sinners, that I may be spared from drinking this awful cup." "Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." There was no revolt on the part of Christ. He is ready to abide by His Father's answer, whatever it may be. There was, it is true, reluctance of the flesh—the drawing back of humanity, the resistance of natural instinct, but that was all. In His purpose of saving the world, according to His Father's plan, Jesus never faltered; never ceased to be the Divine Son.

Several causes have been assigned to account for the deep mental suffering, the unutterable, inconceivable anguish which in Gethsemane overcame the soul of Jesus. Some tell us that Our Lord's Agony in the garden was due to His foreknowledge of the tortures which awaited Him before He would have accomplished the mission for which He had become man. This knowledge of the future is one feature in the mournful life of Our Savior in which He stands alone, one condition which added to His sorrows a bitterness from which all other mortal sufferers are exempt.

It is a merciful provision of human life that our trials and miseries are unforeseen by us. In the ordinary arrangements

of Providence a veil of obscurity hides from us the threatening aspect of approaching evil, so that the happiness of the passing hour is not marred, nor the severity of present sorrows increased by our vision of the future. There are very few, if any of you, whose lives have not known grief. Sorrows have come to you in the form of sicknesses and pains; of domestic trials and afflictions; of disappointed hopes; of reverses of worldly fortune. Some of these miseries of life you have perhaps found very hard to bear. They would have crushed your soul were it not that ignorance of their coming had mercifully tempered their severity.

This alleviation of sorrow was unknown to Our Savior. Whatever were the sorrows of His life, whatever the mysterious, nameless agonies of His death, He had foreknowledge of them all. We know with certainty that from the commencement of His public ministry, that hour and power of darkness, that cup of mingled woes from which at last it seemed as if His mighty spirit for a moment shrank, was clear and full before His eyes. Frequently words fell from His Lips which indicated that the dread thought of His awful Death was uppermost in His mind. Long before it happened He told His disciples in terms they could but dimly comprehend: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished" (Luke xii. 50). When on the Mount of Transfiguration He enjoyed a brief respite from His toils, in common with celestial visitants, what was the topic on which He chose to discourse with them? St. Luke (Luke ix. 31) tells us that with Moses and Elias He "spoke of His decease that He should accomplish in Jerusalem." As the dreaded hour drew nearer, He took His disciples apart on the way to Jerusalem, as if more fully to unburden His oppressed spirit, and told them that "He must go up to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the ancients and scribes and chief priests, and be put to death and

the third day rise again" (Matt. xvi. 21). And at last, when the traitor came to take Him we are told that: "Jesus therefore knowing all things that should come upon Him went forth and said to them: 'Whom seek ye?' " (John xviii. 4.)

Thus from the very dawn of His earthly ministry Jesus looked forward to its dreadful close. Thick-strewn with sorrows as was every step of His onward path, His eye fixed steadily on that which made Him almost unconscious of lesser ills—that awful gloom which hung over its termination, ever deepening to the end. In Gethsemane He looked steadfastly at the death He was soon to undergo—the most painful, the most disgraceful, the most revolting which could be inflicted by either Jewish or Roman law. Every circumstance in connection with that death was present to His mind—the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the crucifixion, the abandonment in which He was to die, the betrayal of Judas, the denial of Peter, the desertion of all the other Apostles. Christ endured in anticipation all the shame, the betrayal of His friends, the blows, the insults and all the pangs of His Crucifixion and was so afflicted by the awful vision which rose before Him that His Soul was thrown into an agony so intense that blood streamed from every pore in His Sacred Body.

In accounting for the mysterious sorrow which in Gethsemane seized upon the soul of our Redeemer, we must remember that in taking human form the Incarnate Word submitted Himself completely to the laws of humanity. St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that: "The Flesh of Christ was capable of suffering and of death, and consequently His Soul was also capable of suffering. All the quiverings of our flesh, all the agitations of our souls, Jesus felt with this sole difference that His understanding was not disturbed by them, and that no matter how violent the emotion might be, it never succeeded in overcoming His Will."

There was in Christ a true union between the Manhood and the Godhead, but no such imparting of the Godhead to the Manhood as to make the Manhood more than man, or cause it to be untrue to say that the Manhood endured alone what He endured, as the Manhood alone could die, and alone be overwhelmed in that exhaustion and excess of anguish which Jesus experienced in Gethsemane. It would be a confusion of the two natures to suppose that the Godhead communicated to the Manhood what did not properly belong to the created nature. The Word imparted what He willed to the new nature which He took, but He took our nature in the truth of its substance; and in order to be like unto His brethren, He bound Himself to its appointed laws and essential conditions. As He hungered and wept and was wearied, no intervention of His Godhead changing the character or diminishing the force of these natural human infirmities, so the Agony of His Soul and the pain of His Flesh were the true sufferings of a true Manhood, undiminished by their mysterious union with God, the very mystery consisting in the preservation of the distinctness of the two combined natures in the Oneness of the Personality.

There had been many occasions during Our Redeemer's life when His Divinity shielded Him from injury on the part of His enemies, but once "His Hour" had come and His Sacrifice for sin was to be offered up, he was left to suffer to the utmost capacity of His Soul and of His body, without support or comfort or alleviation. Although from eternity Christ, as God, knew all that would happen in time, and as Man, had seen clearly from the moment of His Incarnation the price His Father had exacted for the Redemption of creatures, yet notwithstanding this clear provision of His sufferings it was only in Gethsemane, that by an act of His Divine Will, the flood gates of fear were opened up and overwhelmed Him, causing the bloody sweat and that awful an-

guish which forced from Him the confession: "My Soul is sorrowful even unto death," and induced Him to seek relief from His Heavenly Father, if such were pleasing to Him. Our Blessed Savior would not have been truly Man if His human nature had not recoiled from the sufferings, the disgrace and the death of the cross.

We find another explanation of the mental sorrows which afflicted Our Savior during His Passion in the fact that He was no longer regarded by His Heavenly Father as a "High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. vii. 26), but as a Victim loaded with the iniquities of the whole human family. As the representative of fallen man, assuming his guilt and responsibility, the vengeance of heaven must necessarily descend upon Him. It could not be otherwise. God abhors sin with a hatred which it has not entered into the mind of man to conceive. During the ages that followed Adam's fall He had witnessed its ever increasing ravages over the face of His creation. He saw the first sin quickly succeeded by others without number. He saw that blindness had dimmed the eyes of man, a frenzy seized upon his heart, a perversion of will distorted all his faculties and feebleness of purpose had paralyzed all his efforts for good; that at each step man was plunging deeper and deeper into the abyss of religious ignorance and criminal excess. This condition continued during four thousand years, the Almighty mercifully waiting for the coming of Him Who had assumed human guilt and would suffer and die as Divine Justice demanded in atonement. In the Garden of Gethsemane we see this Redeemer loaded down with the iniquities of all the ages and prepared to offer His Offended Father the Sacrifice He demanded. Upon the shoulders of the Victim have been placed all the foul idolatries and horrible abominations of the pagan world; all the rebellions and treasons of His favorite peo-

ple; every sin of injustice, intemperance, blasphemy, lying, hypocrisy, impurity that will ever be committed until the end of time. This load of guilt Our Savior had freely taken upon Himself that He might be the Vicarious Sinner, and as such stand between sinful man and the Justice of an All-Holy God.

No sooner had Jesus assumed the office of Redeemer and prepared to make the offering which His Father demanded in atonement for human guilt, than His character and feelings underwent a dreadful change. His pure Soul, incapable in itself of the slightest defilement, is now hideously disfigured by millions of abominable sins. They crowd about His Heart; fill His conscience; force their way into every sense and pore of His Mind, covering Him everywhere with a moral leprosy, till He almost felt Himself to be that which He never could be and which His foe would fain have made Him. What horror must have seized upon His Soul when He looked and did not know Himself; thought Himself a foul, a loathsome sinner; thought His Eyes and Hands and Feet and Lips and Heart as members of the evil one and not of God! Can these be the hands of the Immaculate Lamb, once innocent, but now red with ten thousand barbarous deeds of blood? Are these the lips that uttered prayer and praise and holy blessing now defiled by lies, detractions, oaths and blasphemies? Are these the eyes of God profaned as they are by the many evil visions and idolatrous fascinations for which creatures abandoned their Creator? And His Ears, they ring with sounds of revelry and strife; His Heart is frozen with avarice and cruelty and unbelief; His memory is crowded with every sin that has been committed since Adam's fall.

Jesus beholds all these transgressions, divinely imputed to Him that He might suffer for them as the Representative of sinners, in all their naked deformity, in their unutterably

abominable nature and in their soul-destroying power. He sees in them apostasy from the Almighty One, daring rebellion against the Eternal Majesty and base revolt against the law and will of Heaven's King. At the sight of the awful mass of iniquity for which He had made Himself responsible to the justice of His Father, it was not possible for the pure and holy soul of Jesus not to tremble and shudder and be seized with an abhorrence of which we who are so deeply infected by sin can have no conception.

From those about His Cross Jesus gets no sympathy, but on the contrary is pursued by taunts and scoffs and challenges to the last moment of life. Not a friend or a comforter could be seen on Calvary excepting those whose sorrow only aggravated His Own—His heartbroken Mother and His beloved Disciple. All others—the Apostles who had left all things to follow Him; the many who throughout His public life had believed in Him and loved Him—those whom He had befriended, cured when sick, comforted when troubled, had abandoned Him. At this time of intense agony legions of demons surrounded Him and did the utmost that infernal craft, malignity and power could do to harass and perplex, to depress and un-nerve, to torture and agonize the Suffering Savior in the hope of shaking His confidence in His Heavenly Father and causing Him to abandon the work by which He was to accomplish man's deliverance.

The last ingredient in the bitter cup which Jesus, loaded with the sins of the world, had to drink to its dregs was abandonment by His Heavenly Father. This was the bitterest and, to us, the most mysterious of all Our Savior's mental sorrows. It was not strange that the world had forsaken Him or that demons had assailed Him. These two powers had been at all times and ever will be against Him. His Father's Presence, however, He could always depend upon. This consolation—in His dying hour alone—was denied Him.

It was then in extremity of grief that the Sufferer cried out : "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" How could He be, it may be asked, forsaken by God Who is essentially One with Him? We cannot answer. We know only that from the depths of suffering into which Jesus had sunk, such distress overpowered Him, such horrible and death-like terror appaled Him and such infernal temptations roared around Him that bereft of all support of the Divine Nature, a feeling came over Him as if He were exiled from the fellowship of God and entirely given over to the powers of darkness. Not only did all the horrors which sin had ever produced in the world expand themselves before Him, but He also entered with His holy soul, in a manner incomprehensible to us, into the fellowship of our consciousness of guilt and emptied the whole of the horrible cup of the wages of sin, the bitterest ingredient of which is abandonment by God.

There is no doubt, my brethren, that Jesus in Gethsemane shrank from the physical torture and the cruel death which awaited Him; that He saw in long perspective the insults, the buffeting, the hours of agony upon the cross and that in consequence His spirit was weighed down with an unutterable dread. It is also certain, as I have explained to you, that a second cause of the mental sufferings endured by Our Redeemer throughout His Passion was the vision, ever confronting Him, of the awful mass of guilt for which He had made Himself accountable to the Justice of His Offended Father.

There was yet another source of suffering which contributed its share to the agonies which tore the soul of Our Dying Lord. Out of love for man He had left His throne in heaven and assumed human nature that He might become man's Savior. Man, however, had rejected Him and frustrated the plans of the Offended Almighty for his redemp-

tion. This knowledge added bitterness to the cup which Jesus had to drain. Holy Scripture assures us that grief on the part of the Creator because of the misery which His creatures bring upon themselves by sin, is an emotion to which the Divine mind is not a stranger.

You remember that remarkable passage in the Book of Genesis in which the Almighty is represented as being filled with sorrow at the change which sin had brought into His creation. Once He "saw all things that He had made and they were very good" (Gen. i. 31). The sins of creatures wrought such a change in the work of His Hands that it was scarcely recognizable as His Creation. Because of the ruin, the defilement, which had taken hold of all He had made, the scriptures tell us, God was "touched inwardly with sorrow of heart," and repented that He had created man. You remember that occasion in Our Savior's life when He wept over Jerusalem. It was one of the few times in His career when, we would imagine, He had reason to be overjoyed, yet He wept. It was not because with a prophet's eye He saw three crosses raised on Calvary's awful summit and Himself writhing in pain on one of them, crucified between two thieves. He Who, on His way to Crucifixion, exclaimed to the company of women that bewailed and lamented His cruel treatment: "Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for Me, but for yourselves and for your children," had no tears to shed at the prospect of His own sufferings and death. He wept over Jerusalem because those joyous shouts in honor of the Son of David, would in a few years be turned into curses and execrations and unanswered prayers for mercy, whilst the Roman army would leave Jerusalem, deserted by her God, a heap of blackened ruins and thousands, hundreds of thousands of her citizens would not only lose their lives, but their soul's salvation because they had rejected Him, their Savior.

It is certain, my brethren, that as His end drew near the

compassion for sinners, which had been at all times characteristic of Our Savior's life, became more pronounced. There is no doubt that in His final moments, dying on the cross, His Soul was as never before convulsed with agonies of grief, as He thought of all He had done to insure salvation to His creatures, and knew that nevertheless many of them would perish eternally; that the purpose of His Death would not fully be achieved; that despite the infinite merits of His Sacrifice, the world would not be wholly regenerated by it; that unto the end satan would dispute with Him the dominion of this world and hold sway over hearts for whose redemption He was dying. He saw in vision that awful Judgment Day when He is to re-visit the earth, not as a Savior, however, but as an Avenger, a Rigorous Judge demanding a strict accounting for every drop of the Precious Blood which He had shed for sinners.

We, my brethren, can have not even a faint conception of the paroxysms of grief that must have torn Our Loving Savior's Soul on Calvary, as He thought of the many to Whom He must address in the end the terrible words of condemnation: "Depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire." It is not His wish that anyone should perish, but that all be eternally happy with Him in heaven. Hell, to which sinners will be condemned forever, is not His work, but the work of man. It exists by no arbitrary law; by no mere act of Divine legislation, but is an intrinsic necessity, resulting from the perfection of God on the one hand, and the wilful apostacy of man on the other. If there be One Who is Holy, Just, Pure, True and Unchangeable, and if man be unholy, unjust, impure and false and will not change by repentance, as light and darkness cannot exist together, God and that soul cannot unite in eternity. The All-Perfect Being; the Lawgiver and the Ruler of men cannot admit into His kingdom one who had been guilty of unrepented

murder, adultery, seduction, impurity, avarice or intemperance. Man is not a mere automaton, my brethren, nor a mere animal of sense and instinct. Neither is he an independent, self-ruling being, but a creature made to his Creator's image and likeness, with intellect to know the good and with free-will to choose it; with sufficient grace always given him to attain the end of his creation. If such a being deliberately abuses these gifts and graces, refuses to acknowledge his dependence on the Creator and Lawgiver; prefers mere creatures to Him and dies insolently refusing that homage the Almighty One demands, He can do naught than leave him to his choice for all eternity. It is not in the power of Omnipotence to save man without his consent and co-operation.

Hence the awful sorrow that came to our dying Savior as He thought of the many for Whom His coming, His life, teaching and death would avail nothing. He grieved because of the misery which their rejection of Him would bring upon them, as a few days before He had wept bitter tears over lost Jerusalem. Time and time again during the days of their probation would He plead with them, but in vain. Though He wanted to bless man, man would compel Him to curse him. Though He wanted to save, man would compel Him to destroy. Everlasting condemnation, wrath, ruin, wretchedness man had chosen and this must be his portion. No alternative remained. Spiritual writers tell us that throughout His Passion, Jesus was constantly assailed by a feeling of despondency, discouragement and disappointment because He knew that despite His Sacrifice countless souls would be eternally lost, separated from Him and condemned to hell's unquenchable flames.

In our considerations this evening on the Mental Sufferings of Jesus in His Passion conviction of the awfulness of sin has been uppermost in our minds. It was sin that put

enmity between man and his Maker and, by God's decree, made the Incarnation necessary. It was sin that made the Redeemer a sufferer throughout life, and brought about His cruel and ignominious death. It will be sin, and nothing else than sin, that will render the Savior's Sacrifice unavailing for you and for me, my brethren. These are important truths. They must regulate our lives. In this age of irreligion and indifference it is becoming that we have a right conception of sin and its consequences. In the philosophy of our day sin is an excusable error, an amiable weakness, a pardonable mistake, and hence the idea of an eternal hell, sin's punishment, is most revolting to our generation. We Catholics, however, have different notions concerning sin. In our estimation it is not a mere imperfection; not something involuntary, but always a free deliberate act, and in so far as it is sin, an act of malice. We estimate its guilt, its heinousness and its awful consequences when we stand on Calvary and see Jesus, Son of God, dying on a cross that sin might be atoned for.

THE THREE HOURS' AGONY

INTRODUCTORY SERMON

AS day by day, throughout the course of the ecclesiastical year, our Holy Church gathers her children about her, she tells them again and again of the life, deeds and teachings of her Founder; how He came from heaven to save a sinful world; lived amongst men for thirty-three years, striving both by word and example to fit them for an eternal union with Him in heaven. On today,—Good Friday,—she earnestly invites all to Calvary, to witness the closing scene of this Savior's earthly mission. In response to this invitation of your Holy Church, you, my brethren, have gathered here this afternoon. All about you is typical of grief and sorrow and desolation. At other times during the year, within these walls there are signs of worship, of joy, and of life. The lamp burns before the tabernacle, candles are lighted upon the altar, fresh fair flowers may be seen among the sculptured saints and angels, that guard the sanctuary where the Hidden Lord has taken up His abode. But now there is no sign of life, no sign of worship, no sign of joy. The church itself is draped in deepest black; no flowers adorn the altar, no lights brighten it. The sanctuary lamp is extinguished; the doors of the tabernacle are thrown open to show you that the God of the temple has gone,—that the abomination of desolation has fallen upon His very holiest place. All this, my brethren, is intended to bring to our minds that awful tragedy which took place on Calvary nineteen hundred years ago. We have come here this afternoon to recall that tragedy, and to study for awhile all-important

truths which at no other time impress themselves so forcibly upon us.

For one who accepts the sacred pages as God's inspired word, there can be no doubt that the Almighty demanded full satisfaction for Adam's sin; that there was no one among created beings who could by his own merit reverse the judgment that had been rendered against guilty man, and that it was necessary for God's Eternal Son to come on earth, assume human nature and offer Himself, in the sinner's place,—a sacrifice of propitiation to His offended Father. The sacred pages also assure us that when this Savior came down from heaven to be man's Best Friend, He was regarded as an enemy and rejected as such by those Whom He had come to serve and save. Even at the very moment when angelic hosts were proclaiming an event that brought glory of God and peace to men, creatures were beginning to lay snares for their Savior and to dispute His right to the homage of their hearts. When thirty years after, He entered upon His public mission, He gave the Jews every assurance that He was the One for whose coming they had been waiting. His wonderful deeds of miraculous healing; His raising the dead to life before their eyes, as well as the sovereign power which He displayed over the forces of nature, fixed the attention of all classes on Him.

St. Matthew tells of some of the occurrences of the first days of Christ's public mission. "Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom: and healing all manner of sickness and every infirmity among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria, and they presented to Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments and such as were possessed by devils, and lunatics and those that had palsy and He cured them. And much people followed Him from Galilee and from Decapolis and from Jerusalem and

from Judea and from beyond the Jordan" (Matt. iv. 23). This was the standing of Jesus shortly after entering upon His great work.

Before the first year of His Public Mission had come to a close His wonderful deeds had become subject of conversation in every boat that sailed Genesareth's waters, and in most Jewish homes His Name had become a household word. Not all amongst the chosen people looked with favorable eyes on Jesus. From the very beginning the wealthy and influential assumed an attitude of opposition to Him. For a time the more worldly of the Jews,—the Sadducees and Herodians,—paid little attention to Him. Their wealth, business, court influence, and amusements, were uppermost in their minds, and they had no time for consideration of a religious movement which was going on amongst the lower orders. The public rumor that one regarded by many as the Messiah had appeared did not excite their interest, for they did not share the popular expectations on the subject. It was only when the movement seemed to them to be leading to a political revolt, which would bring down the iron hand of the Roman masters on their country, afford the Procurator an excuse for new extortions and imperial their own property and comforts, that they thought it worth their while to pay attention to Jesus and His claims.

Very different, however, was it with the Scribes and Pharisees—the more religious section of the Jewish leaders. Naturally they took a deep interest in all ecclesiastical and religious phenomena. Any movement of a religious kind could not but excite the eager attention of those who were commonly regarded as rulers, teachers, and guides, in God's kingdom amongst men. When Christ appeared and worked wonders, their souls were stirred for they ardently cherished Messianic hopes, and were smarting keenly under foreign domination. They gave Jesus earnest attention from the

first. They watched His actions; weighed His words; discussed His doctrines and His claims, and decided against Him, because He was so unlike the Messiah Whom they were looking for, and their fathers had taught them to expect. Besides, He completely traversed their prejudices and maxims and dishonored so many things which they regarded as sacred.

One thing about Jesus which from the first excited the opposition of the Jewish leaders, was the humbleness of His origin. Their eyes were dazzled with the ordinary prejudices of the rich and the learned, and they could not discern the grandeur of the soul, apart from the accidents of position and culture. Jesus was the son of poor parents, they thought; He had been a carpenter; they believed He had been born in rude and wicked Galilee; He had neither passed through the schools of Jerusalem, nor drunk of the acknowledged wells of wisdom there. They thought that a prophet and, above all, Israel's Savior, should have been born in Judea, reared in Jerusalem,—the center of culture and religion,—and be allied with all that was distinguished and influential in the nation.

They were offended too because of the followers Christ chose and of the company He kept. His Apostles had not been selected from among themselves—the wise, the high-born—but were uneducated laymen, poor fishermen. Nay, one of them was a publican. Nothing that Jesus had done perhaps gave them greater offense than the choosing of Matthew,—the tax-gatherer,—to an Apostle. The Tax-gatherers, as servants of an alien and heathen power, were hated by all who were patriotic and religious, because of their trade, their extortions and their character. How, the Pharisees probably asked, could Jesus hope that respectable, learned and God-fearing men, should enter a circle such as that which He had formed about Himself? Besides, they

objected, He mingled freely with the lowest classes of the population,—not only with the publicans, but with others, known to be slaves of sin. They hated Him also, because He showed compassion for the weak and erring ones; they thought they had brought against Him an unpardonable offense, when they called Him the Friend of Sinners.

The opposition of the Jewish leaders to Jesus and His Mission was intensified by His treatment of them. He never missed an opportunity of assailing their principles and their sinful lives. The work which He had come from heaven to perform demanded that He attack the abuses and false ideals of His day. This He did at all times. It would be a serious mistake were we to think of Him as all mildness and meekness. There is scarcely a trait in His character more conspicuous than His fierce, burning, indignation in the presence of what was unpardonably wrong. Never has there been uttered in the history of speech, words so scathing, so annihilating, as those spoken by Jesus against the Scribes, Pharisees and Priests of His day. Again and again He unmasked their hypocrisy, their pretensions, their sinful lives and held them up for scorn and contempt. These masters in Israel were wrought up to the highest pitch of rage, as they saw their influence over others weakened by Christ's terrible denunciations, and were finally put face to face with the alternative of either accepting Jesus as a teacher from heaven, or of bringing about His death as a blasphemous imposter.

They planned to put Jesus to death. They found it no easy matter to carry out their scheme. The common people loved the Savior, trusted Him, clung to Him at all times. Even up to a few days before His Passion, they regarded Him as One whom Jehovah had sent amongst them, and with one voice cried aloud, as He entered their city: "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed be He who comes in the name of the Lord." The plan of the enemies of Christ to bring about His

death quietly, so that no public commotion should be caused, failed. Just at the time they imagined their schemes were about to succeed, Jesus baffled their efforts. He was in the hands of God. Whilst He had come on earth to die for man, He was at all times under the guidance of His Father. His Sacrifice for the Redemption of the world He would offer at the time pleasing to His Eternal Father. When this hour, determined upon in the councils of eternity, arrived Jesus boldly and defiantly set His Face towards Jerusalem, saying to His Apostles: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles and shall be mocked and scourged and spit upon. And after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death. And the third day He shall rise again" (Luke xviii. 31).

These words convey Our Lord's fixed resolution. His Sacred Heart was firmly and immutably bent on accepting—because of His Heavenly Father's decree—the awful death which His enemies had planned for Him at Jerusalem. With impressive earnestness He rejected the advice of Simon Peter, to save Himself by keeping away from Jerusalem: "Go behind Me, satan, thou art a scandal unto Me: because thou savorest not the things that are of God but the things that are of men" (Matt. xvi. 23). At the time Peter's words of caution were spoken, the Sanhedrim had already assembled at Jerusalem to deliberate as to the best way of putting Jesus to death. They decided that He should be seized quietly, so that no tumult should be caused among the people; that He should be taken without warning, whilst He was in some secluded spot; if possible, at night; that He should be tried and condemned without delay; that His death by Crucifixion should follow quickly on His condemnation.

Whilst deliberating as to the best time and manner of

carrying out this plan, Judas, the Apostle, arrives and agrees for thirty pieces of silver to betray his Master into their hands. His offer having been accepted, he leads them away to the Garden of Gethsemane, where he probably knew Jesus could be found. No sooner had the traitor pointed out his Master than Jesus was seized, securely tied and hurried away as a criminal to the judgment seat of the high priest Annas. The judge, a party to the plot, attempted to draw from Jesus some admission which he might make the ground of a formal accusation against Him, but failing in this he ordered the Prisoner to be taken before Caiphas. At this second tribunal, Jesus was found guilty of blasphemy, for having declared Himself to be the Christ, Son of the Living God, and was deemed worthy of death on a cross.

This judgment of their ecclesiastical court must be approved by the civil ruler, who alone, according to the Roman law, could order its execution. With this end in view, the Savior was hurried away to the court of Pilate. Here, the witnesses whose testimony had brought about the Prisoner's condemnation, were again examined. Pilate on hearing the evidence brought against Jesus, declares Him to be innocent. Knowing, however, that this verdict would displease the rabble that thronged the streets about him, demanding Christ's Blood, Pilate added: "As He is from Galilee, take Him before Herod, Governor of that province." Here again no crime can be proven against the Prisoner, and Herod orders Him to be taken back to Pilate. This ruler, unwilling to consent to Christ's death, resorts to one scheme after another in an effort to cause the mob that was crying aloud for His Blood, to relent in their demands. Seeing, however, that it was impossible to save Jesus and have the approval of the mob, He makes a sacrifice of Jesus,—hands Him over to His enemies, authorizing them to do with Him as they please.

It was probably between eight and nine o'clock on that Friday morning, when all was in readiness to proceed with the Crucifixion. The cross to which Jesus was to be nailed had been prepared; the "title," to be hung above His Head, had been written; two criminals had been selected for crucifixion with Him,—one at His right hand, the other at His left; a centurion and soldiers had been told off for the execution, and all were ready to proceed to Calvary. Our Dear Lord, at the time He was commanded to take up the cross, was nigh dead. He Who had hungered and thirsted; Who had sat in weariness by Jacob's well; Who had fallen asleep, outworn and weary in the midst of the storm, was led from Pilate's judgment hall completely exhausted.

Fifteen long hours had gone by since He stooped to wash the disciples feet. With what deeds and pains and emotions and tortures had those hours been crowded! No wonder His frame had so weakened that when the heavy cross was laid upon Him, He found the burden greater than He could bear and staggered, swayed and fell to the earth. His enemies, fearing His death, before they should have the satisfaction of nailing Him to the wood, compel another to pick up and carry the heavy load, whilst with blasphemies and blows they force Jesus again to His Feet. Worn with the sorrows and afflictions of death and weakened by the great amount of Blood He had lost, first in the garden at Gethsemane and again at the time of the awful scourging, Jesus once more faces the rugged steep on the summit of which He is to die. He was preceded and followed and surrounded by a jeering mob full of hatred for Him. Some in that throng were led on by a morbid curiosity, dishonorable to humanity, urging men and women to gloat over scenes of violence and cruelty and death. There were also priests whose privileges He had invaded; Pharisees whose hypocrisy He had exposed; Sadducees whose scepticism and unbelief He had reproved;

Scribes whose pride and formalism He had scourged,—among the elements that added to the agonies of the journey to Calvary and made of it one protracted scene of insult and outrage and pain. No word of sympathy reached the Sufferer except from a small group of pious women who lamented His fate and drew from Him His last words of public ministry. It may not have been that these women were ready to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. They knew though of the strokes of the scourge; they saw the pallor of weakness on His cheek and the sweat of exhaustion on His Brow; they remembered His deeds of mercy; His love and longing for their little ones; His compassion for their sick, and were wounded in heart because of the unjust and merciless wrongs that had been heaped upon Him.

At length the sad procession reached Calvary's summit. Simon threw down his burden of the cross and withdrew. Jesus was quickly stripped of His garments. All the wounds of the scourging burst forth afresh, as the clotted blood comes away with the vestments that are roughly torn from His Body. He was then laid on the cross; His arms, so often extended in blessing to me, were stretched along the wood, whilst with sickening thud, under the blows of the heavy hammer, the nails were driven through the bones and flesh, nerves and tendons. The cross was then placed upright in the hole prepared for it beforehand. So was the Son of Man lifted up from earth; His Crucifixion was now completed; there remained only the weary interval till death should deliver Him from His Agonies.

We have come here this afternoon, my brethren, to attend the last moments of our Crucified Savior; to observe each particular of His deportment and especially to catch and to ponder over every word which fell from His dying lips. Some of you have stood at the death bed of a father, with hands clasped in his; with wet eyes looking into his eyes,

from which the light was fast growing out. You listened then in the silent, darkened room to the words of wisdom and of love which he spoke to you with difficulty, and ever since they have been as guiding stars along life's pathway. Others amongst you have stood at the bedside of a pious mother, breathing her last, and heard from pale and quivering lips her parting counsels. Years may have gone by since then, still those words are fresh in your memory. You may have wandered far from virtue's path and plunged deep into the vortex of sin, yet amidst the pauses in your mad career the voice of that dying mother still rings through your soul in tones as solemn and as awful as a voice from eternity.

The words of Jesus, spoken from the cross, were death-bed words like these. It is true that all the words He uttered were weighty, important and precious. He never spoke a vain or an idle word, nor one which was not calculated to minister grace to the hearer. Even His enemies made this acknowledgment: "Never did man speak like this Man" (John vii. 46). The dying words of Christ are of particular interest to those who love Him. In that hour—the most solemn and important which the universe has ever witnessed—when the world's guilt was laid upon Him, and all the powers of hell let loose against Him, the few sentences He uttered will ever command the attention of those who revere His Name. You, my brethren, have gathered here this afternoon to study these dying words of Christ. We will take them up in the order in which they fell from Our Savior's lips, hoping to draw from them the precious lessons it was intended they should teach us in shaping our lives after that of our Great Model.

THE THREE HOURS' AGONY

THE FIRST WORD

"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."—*Luke xxiii. 34.*

JESUS, my brethren, hangs dying on the cross. A long, trying night had been passed since His apprehension in the olive groves of Gethsemane. During the fifteen hours which had gone by since then, He had suffered bodily pain, weariness and cold, with reproach and insult, cruel mockings and scourgings and buffetings and untold agonies of mind as well as of body. These sufferings were multiplied and added to as the end drew near, after they had nailed Him to the cross. As he looked from the gibbet He could see about Him many who had long been plotting against Him. He could see indeed some beloved ones there—His Blessed Mother and the other Mary, the Beloved Disciple and the Magdalene—but the sight of them only added sorrow to His sorrow. He hears the taunts of the bloodthirsty rabble, goaded on by the Jewish leaders. He sees the look of satisfaction in the eyes of the priests as they ridicule and challenge Him. They had done everything they could to add to His torment and ignominy. His Sacred Body was streaming blood from the wounds which they had opened. His Head was smarting from the crown of thorns which they had plaited and pressed upon Him. His mouth was drenched with the gall they had given Him to quench His thirst. His ears were ringing with the blasphemous scoffs and taunts and challenges which they had uttered. They could do nothing more against Him. This was the moment chosen by Jesus to

He spoke His First Word from the cross: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

The Prophet Isaias (Is. liii.) in unmistakable language had given a description of the Redeemer's Passion with all its attendant circumstances ages before its occurrence. He declared that Israel's Savior should be despised and rejected by men; that He should be a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with infirmity; that He should be wounded, bruised and chastised for our sins; that He should be led unresistingly, as a sheep, to slaughter; that He should be dumb as a lamb before His shearer; that He should not only suffer at the hands of man, but be bruised also by the Lord; He should be cut off out of the land of the living; He shall deliver His Soul unto death and pray for His transgressors.

We see the fulfillment of these predictions of the Prophet in the life and death of Jesus Christ. He had come on earth to be man's Savior. Man rejected Him, opposed Him and even in His Infancy sought His life. When He entered upon His missionary labors, enemies bitter, inveterate, uncompromising, confronted Him. He never appeared in public but they were on hand to question Him, to puzzle Him, to impugn His motives, to misrepresent His teachings, to make Him and His doctrine odious to those who had learned to love and to trust Him. During these years of persecution, opposition and misrepresentation, they had been looking forward to, and at all times planning, His death. The hour of their triumph at last came. Feelings of joy, exultation and of victory filled their souls as with gloating eyes they were witnesses of the slow and excruciating death-agony of their Victim. Not satisfied with this, they grouped about His cross and laughed at Him, taunted Him, ridiculed, defied and challenged Him. Never was a conqueror more jubilant than they. Never did hatred persevere to the end so unrelentingly as on Calvary.

Their feelings towards Jesus dying on the cross to which they had nailed Him could arouse no bitterness, no desire for vengeance within His Soul. He is the God of love. He had come from heaven because of love. His whole life had known no other principle than that of love, and even though He had been hated, despised and persecuted by His enemies, even though His good deeds towards them had been repaid by them with reproaches and insults, cruel mockings and scourgings and buffetings and untold agonies both of body and of mind, love still controlled Him. Frequently during His public life had He told His hearers that they must love all men, even their bitterest enemies, if they would be His disciples. In the Sermon on the Mount He had filled up the comparatively imperfect outlines of the picture of love as drawn by the law. "You have heard that it hath been said: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy' but I say to you: Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (Matt. v. 43). To more forcibly impress this teaching upon His followers He related the story of the unforgiving servant, setting before them the mercifulness which is characteristic of God in dealing with sinners, and the imitation which is to be the most distinctive mark of all His disciples. "So also shall My Heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts."

Anxious that the obligation of forgiving injuries should be kept at all times before the minds of His followers, He brings it to their notice in that form of prayer which He taught them for their daily use: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us," after which He took occasion to enlarge upon this particular petition saying: "If you forgive men their offenses, your Heavenly Father will forgive you also your offenses; but if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offenses"

(Matt. vi. 14). In these words, He plainly states that if we forgive freely, fully and heartily, without reserve all who have injured us, we may hope to obtain from God pardon for our own offenses. If, on the other hand, we do not thus forgive—even our most bitter enemies—if we forgive in name only, partially, conditionally, not from the heart, but for appearance sake, we pray our Heavenly Father to treat us as we treat those who have done us wrong. There is an awful meaning to that petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Again and again throughout His life, Our Savior repeated in unmistakable language His favorite teaching that the creature's forgiveness by God is dependent on his own pardon of others for injuries which they may have done him. At one time Peter put to his Master the question: "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me and I forgive him, till seven times?" Jesus answered: "I say not to thee till seven times, but seventy times seven times," taking away by these words all limitations to forgiveness, and implying that there can be no injury however deadly or however frequently repeated which the Christian is not bound to pardon.

Christ's doctrine on the forgiveness of injuries was His most striking innovation in morality. Other Christian virtues were in a degree familiar to the heathen world, that is to say, they had often been witnessed and always with admiration. As duties, however, they had never been recognized. It was quite different with forgiveness of injuries as laid down by Christ. It is true, that forgiveness of injuries was not unknown to the ancients, but neither Jew nor heathen ever grasped the duty as promulgated by Jesus. There can be no doubt that under certain conditions it was common amongst them. In domestic and family life it undoubtedly characterized the dealings of one member with another. Friends fell out then and were reconciled as now. But where

the only relation between the two parties was that of injurer and injured, and the only claim of the offender to forgiveness was that he was a human being, in such cases forgiveness of injury was not only not practical but was neither enjoined nor approved. People not only did not forgive their enemies, but did not wish to do so, nor think better of themselves for having done so. Nevertheless, forgiveness of an enemy was not unknown to the world before the coming of Christ. The pagans could conceive such a thing; they could feel that there was a divine beauty about it and more than could be expected of human nature.

When Jesus announced His doctrine on the forgiveness of all offenders, it was considered as the world today regards it—a beautiful dream never to be put in force in practical life. On Calvary, however, He proved to all generations that this duty not only can but must be practiced. What He enjoins on us who would be His disciples, He does Himself. “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,” was the petition addressed to His Eternal Father by the dying Savior in behalf of those who had nailed Him to the cross. That Jesus should have chosen the duty of forgiving injuries for one of His dying lessons and preached it so powerfully from the cross by His own example must convince us of the need of such instruction. He might have died for us without the pains, taunts, mockeries and insults with which He surrounded Himself on Calvary, but then we would not have the bright inspiring example of His forgiveness and prayer, nor the revelation of the feelings of His Loving Heart for all who had been a party to His cruel death.

No one who claims to be a Christian can even question his own duty towards those who have offended him, when he pictures his Savior dying in shame and agony, and hears His prayer in behalf of those who had nailed Him to the cross: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

This petition was made, first of all, for the soldiers who had actually taken part in the Crucifixion. They were coarse, cruel, uneducated men, doing the bidding of their superior officer. They knew nothing about Christ. In their hearts there was no ill will against Him. They probably assumed, however, that the sentence of death passed upon Him was a just one. Our Lord's plea for them, "they know not what they do" was true. In His prayer for mercy Jesus included the Jewish people, though they had rejected Him as their Savior, had preferred Barabbas to Him, demanded His Death and asked that His blood should descend upon them and upon their children. They had done all this, but in ignorance. Their spiritual guides had misled them; had falsely and wickedly painted Jesus as an imposter, a hypocrite, a false Messiah and as one in league with satan. The poor people who trusted to their teachers were deceived by them and hence Jesus in His prayer for mercy could say to them: "They know not what they do."

Christ's petition included even the Jewish rulers, the Scribes and Pharisees and the members of the Jewish council who were the real causes of all His wrongs. They knew how utterly false were the charges they had made against their Victim. They must have been conscious of the unworthy motives which had prompted their persecution of Him. Yet in His mercy, Jesus finds an excuse for them and includes them in His prayer: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." No doubt there was a certain amount of ignorance concerning Him in the minds of the Jewish leaders. St. Peter (Acts iii. 17), speaking of Christ's Death, to the Jews said: "I know that you did it through ignorance as did also your rulers." St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. ii. 8), says that were not the Jews in ignorance concerning Christ "they would never have crucified the Lord of glory." This circumstance which lessened their guilt may seem strange to us.

It is difficult to understand how the Jews could be in ignorance concerning Christ. The Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Him were sufficiently plain to identify Him as the Holy One of God. His teaching was unique. Even His critics were forced to admit: "Never did man speak like this man" (John vii. 46). For three years before their eyes, He had lived a life such as had never before been lived on earth. There was no self-seeking in that life. It was concerned with the glory of His Father and with the interests, temporal and eternal, of creatures. The scripture says of this life that it was spent in doing good. For three years Jesus was recognized as the Friend of Sinners. He helped all who came to Him. He fed the hungry; healed the sick; relieved the troubled. No one had ever been driven from His presence as unworthy of His notice. Even those whom the world regarded as hopeless,—the ruined wreck of humanity, the publicans and the harlots,—found in Him a Friend.

All this was undeniable; it was a matter of public notoriety. But what was not known, and it was upon this that Divine Charity fastened as the one loophole through which His enemies might escape, was that He Who had done these things was their God; that He was the Creator who had been so kind, so loving, so forgiving to the creature; that He was the Lord of Life for whose Blood they had cried aloud and Whom they had nailed to the cross. They thought they were taking away His Life from Him, they did not understand that He was laying it down of Himself. They knew they were outraging a human friend—not that they were slaying a Divine friend. They knew they were betraying a fellow creature, that they were sinning against every code of human decency and gratitude and justice; they knew as did Pilate that they were killing a just man, that they were taking on their heads the Blood of an Innocent Person, but they did not know Him to be the Lord of Glory. They knew the

horror but not the full horror of what they did. Their ignorance was not, however, of such a nature that it excused them from sin. Had they not been guilty there would have been no need of forgiveness from on high, no reason for Christ praying His Heavenly Father to grant them mercy.

Jesus, in the last discourse He had delivered to His Apostles, declared in unmistakable language the ignorance of the Jews concerning Him to be culpable. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father" (John xv. 22). And yet again, they did not know what they did. Alas! desire for vengeance, malice and above all things else, religious hatred, is so blinding and so maddening and so unreasoning, that it really turns rational men into unreasonable animals, not to say demons. Religious hatred has such a plausible way of justifying to itself the most terrible acts of which one can be guilty that even in this sense we may say that the leaders of the Jews in their rejection, persecution, condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus knew not what they did.

The Eternal Father could not refuse the request made by His Dying Son, and so it happened that vengeance was withheld. If ever there was a time since creation when vengeance would have been justified, it was on Calvary, when the enemies of Jesus had nailed Him to the cross. His prayer for them, however, disarmed His Heavenly Father. The earth did not open her yawning abyss; fire did not fall from heaven, nor did hell swallow up the culprits, but because of Christ's intercession the Almighty gave the Jewish people a respite of forty years in which to realize the enormity of the deed they had perpetrated on Calvary and to become disciples of Him Whom they had rejected. Even more: the thief

dying by Christ's side who was converted, the heathen captain who professed belief in the Divinity of Jesus; the people who struck their breasts in contrition as nature made acknowledgment of her dying God; the thousands who on Whitsunday and thereafter embraced Christianity, all these show the effect of Christ's prayer on the cross.

I would not be doing justice to my subject, to the occasion which has brought you here this afternoon or to your own spiritual interests, were I not to remind you, my brethren, that your Savior thought of you also in the appeal for mercy He made His Heavenly Father from the cross. In that howling mob which surrounded His gibbet and taunted and ridiculed Him, He saw each and every one of you. You were all on Calvary at the time He was suffering, dying and praying for sinners. You were there, not simply as spectators, but as actors in that awful tragedy. You are apt to overlook this truth; to regard as a pious fancy of the imagination the statement that you are partakers in the guilt of those who nailed Jesus to the cross. You are accustomed to look upon the Savior's Death as a tragedy of long ago, full of deepest interests to us and claiming our warmest love, sympathy and gratitude, but in no way associated with anything we of to-day may have done or left undone.

No belief could be more false than this. In His last moments Jesus, before closing His Eyes in death, assembled before Him not only from the ages which had gone by but from those also which were to come, the whole race of men for whose redemption He was dying. Not one creature from all the tribes and peoples was absent, nor was one deed in the life of each one of that countless host standing before the Savior's cross hidden from His view. Your lives, your deeds, my brethren, stood out in those dark hours far plainer to His spiritual vision, than did His weeping Mother, or the Beloved Disciple or the blaspheming Jews about His cross

to His corporal sight. In that sad moment He saw not only the personal sins of each one before Him, but the sins of everyone of you who have gathered here this afternoon. He saw your sins of unbelief, of cold disdain and of contempt for others in the Sadducee. He saw your sins of pride, of selfishness, of hypocrisy in the Pharisee. He saw in others your sins of anger, hatred, uncharitableness; your revengeful thoughts and words and deeds. He heard all your oaths, all your blasphemies of His Holy Name; all your immodest, obscene words in the shouts and jeerings and mockeries of the rabble that surrounded Him.

Yet in spite of the fact that each sinful act of yours touched His sensitive Heart as really as did the blasphemies of His enemies or the love and compassion of His friends and dear ones, He included you also, my brethren, in His dying prayer. He pleaded in your behalf that you sinned through ignorance; that you really did not know what you were doing when you offended your Heavenly Father. No doubt your knowledge of God and of His holy law is clearer than was the knowledge of the Jews, but still it cannot be that you have ever sinned with perfect consciousness of what sin is; how God hates it; how it outrages His Divine Majesty; how it brought shame, grief, sufferings and death to man's Savior. The misfortune is, my brethren, that in the hurry and crush of life we forget Calvary, and the ransom our Redeemer paid to set the sinner free. We forget that by sin we have smitten Him in the face; bruised and torn His sinless body with cruel scourges and placed a crown of thorns on His aching Head. We forget that by sin we nailed Him to the cross and pierced His Sacred Heart with a spear, and yet though guilty we did it through ignorance, born of passion and irreflection, and so for us our dying Lord truly pleads to the Father: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." God grant, my brethren, that henceforth

your lives may no longer be characterized by indifference towards your dearest interests. Christ should be more to you than a noble figure in the far away past. He is your Savior. Memory of Him and of His Passion should be never absent from your hearts.

It remains for me to add, in concluding, one word more on the necessity of all who look upon Christ as their Model, following His example in all things and particularly in pardoning and in praying for those who have done them wrong. Without this spirit, salvation is out of question. One is warranted in asking God's forgiveness only when he himself pardons from his heart all who have injured him. This is the real test of true discipleship. The forgiveness of injuries—forgiving from the bottom of the heart one's enemies, praying for them and returning good for evil, blessing for cursing, goes against the grain of human nature more intensely than any other requirement of the Divine law. The very last sin to be given up in many cases is the sin of unforgiveness. Yet there can be no question about one's obligation. He must forgive "from the heart;" must bury in eternal oblivion all remembrance of wrong done him by another; he must treat the offender as though he had never offended, and pray his Heavenly Father to pardon him. This is the way God forgives; the way Christ forgave on Calvary; the only way by which you, sinner, can hope for mercy. You are hastening on to eternity. Soon, very soon, you who find it so hard to forgive, whose pride is so easily wounded, whose resentment is so quickly aroused; who cherish enmities for long, long years and reject all efforts to bring about a reconciliation with another, must appear pleading for mercy before the great tribunal over which will be seen written in letters of fire the rule of justice that is to guide the Eternal Judge in passing sentence: "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy" (James ii. 13).

THE THREE HOURS' AGONY

THE SECOND WORD

"Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."
—*Luke xxiii. 43.*

THE Second Word spoken by Jesus from the cross was in answer to an appeal made Him by the Penitent Thief. We know not by whose orders it happened that our Savior was crucified between two criminals. No doubt there was malice in this arrangement. Whether done, however, at the command of Pilate or of the Jewish leaders or in accordance with the wishes of the Roman soldiers who assisted at the Crucifixion, there was a Divine purpose behind the wrath of man. Christ's position between two thieves was becoming One of Whom ages before the Prophet (Is. liii. 12) had said that He would be "reputed with the wicked." It was becoming Him Who during life had been frequently charged with being the "Friend of publicans and sinners." It was becoming that He who had left His heavenly home to identify Himself with evil-doers, to make their cause His cause, their fate His fate, should die amongst them as He had lived amongst them, and in doing so, illustrate to the very last moment of His life, both the magnanimity of His own character and the nature of His mission.

Of the sinner hanging by Our Savior's side and crying to Him for mercy, we know very little except that he had been found guilty of acts of depredation on the property of others, and condemned to death. We know nothing of his early life; nothing of the surroundings in which he had been raised; nothing of the circumstances which had turned him away from the path of rectitude and made of him an outlaw. It is

generally supposed that he and his companion belonged to a band of robbers who at that time infested Judea. They had organized under the pretense of resisting the power of Rome and freeing their native land from foreign despotism, but finding it inconvenient to be poor and equally so to be industrious, they soon learned to subsist by plundering their weaker and more peaceable neighbors. If the Penitent Thief belonged to this desperate gang, as is presumed, he had undoubtedly participated with his ferocious companions in the many acts of cruelty and injustice, perhaps even of deliberate murder itself which the nature of their business must have led them to commit. Had this thief been for many years of his life the hardened and abandoned creature he is thought to have been, we would imagine that even had his capture by the authorities and his condemnation to death failed in bringing about a change in his demeanor, his actual exposure on the cross with the near prospect of death and judgment would have softened his obduracy of heart and alarmed his conscience, or at least, that it would have so far suspended the habitual ferocity of his mind, as to produce emotions of kindness and of sympathy towards a fellow sufferer. The contrary, however, was the case. St. Matthew tells us that at the beginning of their punishment, both of the thieves who were crucified with Christ joined the enemies of the Savior in hurling blasphemies, taunts and mockeries against Him "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe Him" (Matt. xxvii. 44). What convincing evidence does this passage give of the savage and unfeeling disposition, or the confirmed and rooted depravity of this dying thief's heart. Inattentive to his own pain and careless as to the eternal world into which he was about to enter, he employed some of the last moments of life in offering insults to his Suffering Savior.

Such was the man Whom Christ selected to be, in His dying moments, the object of special mercy. Though he had absolutely no meritorious claim on Divine consideration, still this did not exclude him from the compassion of the One Who had come from heaven to call sinners to repentance; to seek and to rescue that which was lost. The dying criminal's time on earth was fast drawing to a close. Soon he would be numbered with the dead. As he hangs in deep meditation on the cross, he turns towards the Divine Sufferer by his side. To outward appearance, there was nothing about Christ to cause one to think that He had power to save either Himself or others. The thief that day had marched along with Him through the streets of Jerusalem and had seen His helplessness as He fell three times beneath the weight of the cross. It is probable that this was the first occasion on which he had met Jesus, and there certainly was nothing about Him to impress one with His power. His enemies had triumphed completely over Him. His friends had mostly forsaken Him. Public opinion was unanimously against Him. His very crucifixion was regarded as utterly inconsistent with His Messiahship. His lowly condition had been a stumbling-block to the Jews from the beginning, and His ignominious ending must have strengthened the presumption against His claims, especially in the mind of one who had never seen Him except in this condition. Even many who had believed in Him, found their faith weakened when they saw Him helpless on the cross. And yet, notwithstanding these obstacles to faith, the dying thief recognized his God in the suffering, bleeding, crucified, dying Man by his side. He is convinced that the crown of thorns upon His Head is not altogether a mockery; that the title above the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" written by Pilate's command, is something besides a sneer. He had never been privileged to witness Christ's miracles. He had not beheld His glory on Tabor;

seen His transfigured countenance, His snow-white garments, the splendor that surrounded Him, nor had he heard the Father's voice proclaiming from on high: "This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him." The dying thief knew only of Christ's disgrace and humiliation. He saw a body covered with wounds; a face bruised, smeared with blood; and eyes glassy with approaching death. He knew too, of the opinion entertained of Jesus by those who should know Him best. He knew Him to be scorned by the religious, God-fearing men of His nation; to be that very moment the object of public ridicule by the citizens of Jerusalem, with hardly an exception. In spite of all he heard and saw, the dignity and patience of the Sufferer; the words spoken by Him even at the moment His enemies were nailing Him to the cross: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" went straight to the dying thief's heart. The grace of God had entered there and was doing its mysterious work in that defiled and undeveloped mind, like warm rays of sunlight in a dark and filthy slum. Little by little as light entered, that darkened mind began to catch glimpses of truths before unseen. The first evidence he gave of the change which had come over him, was the reproach of the other thief for his blasphemous appeal to Jesus: "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us" (Luke xxiii. 39). The converted thief would not now be guilty of addressing such insulting language to Jesus. He feels the importance as well as the awfulness of the few moments that lie between him and eternity, and regards the One crowned with thorns hanging by his side, as his only hope. He has seen enough in this dignified individual and has heard enough from Him to believe Him to be the Promised Consolation of Israel. It was this conviction that caused him to reprove his companion: "Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation?" (Luke xxiii. 40.) How moving and heart-

affecting is this call to repentance from one delinquent to another! But hear him further: "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done no evil" (Luke xxiii. 41). What followed this acknowledgment of the Penitent Thief no one in that vast throng which had gathered to see Jesus die in agony and disgrace on that awful hill, could have imagined as possible. The dying malefactor having rebuked his blaspheming fellow-sufferer and impressed the one thing needful, so humbly, kindly, urgently and seriously upon him, looks once more to the other cross upon which Jesus hangs. He recognizes the World's Savior in the criminal before him. He sees a King in One whose throne is a cross; whose diadem is a crown of thorns. Recognizing Him as his Redeemer, his only hope, he cries out to Him as unpresumptuously and humbly, as devoutly and confidently: "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom" (Luke xxiii. 42). He addresses as Lord, the Babe of the Manger, the Child hunted by Herod, the Son of the carpenter, the wandering, homeless Galilean, the Man forsaken, betrayed and despised by His Own people, deserted by His friends and nailed to a cross beside him as the most vile, worthless and execrable object in all Judea. That the thief had a just appreciation of his own unworthiness and sinfulness may be gathered from the humility with which He applies to Christ for mercy. The sons of Zebedee (Matt. xx. 20) once went to Jesus and asked Him the privilege of sitting, one at His right hand and the other at His left hand in His eternal kingdom. How different from the request of these aspiring and ambitious disciples was that of the humbled felon on the cross. He asked no preferment, no seat of honor in Christ's kingdom, only a gracious remembrance—feeling that even this would be more than he was entitled to. Such, my brethren, is always the disposition of those who, with hearts bowed down because of their guilt, seek union

with their Maker. If, with David, they may be but door-keepers in the house of their God; if like the Canaanitish woman, they should be refused the children's bread, and like the dogs, be given but the crumbs that fall from the Master's table; if, as the poor prodigal intended asking for, they should be restored not to the situation of children who had never disobeyed, but to that of hired servants in their Father's household, their souls' desires are gratified because they know that their deserts are exceeded. The Thief's sense of his sinfulness was not suffered to sink him into the depths of despair. Whilst he knew that his years had been mis-spent, that his life had been such as to deserve everlasting punishment, still he had hope in the mercy of God. The Victim who was hanging by his side had come from heaven to save sinners; had during His life associated with them to such an extent that His conduct was held up for reproach by the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees. The thief sees in Him by Divine light, his only hope for pardon, and prays to Him. He asks not for a mitigation of his bodily pains, not for a prolongation of life, not for liberation from the cross, but for the salvation of his soul. Here, my brethren, was Divine illumination in midnight darkness. Even the Apostles had not, at this period, so clear an acquaintance with Christ's real nature and design, as this thief was suddenly embued with. The grace of the Holy Spirit had illumined his mind and enabled him to see the real dignity of the Crucified One. He knows now that He is not the criminal, the deceiver, the rebel, the blasphemer, that His enemies had declared Him to be, but the Immaculate Lamb of God, the All Holy One sent from heaven to save His people from their sins. He did not conceal the change of views which he had experienced, but boldly proclaimed it within the hearing of all around him. The Scribes and Pharisees had accused Jesus in the Jewish courts of many crimes; the people—at the instigation of their

leaders—solicited by their clamors and then ratified by their blasphemous shouts of approbation, the sentence which doomed to the cross the Lord of life and glory. Amid that crowd of false accusers and judges, the converted thief alone dissents from the general opinion entertained of Jesus, and publicly and fearlessly asserts His innocence and His dignity. It must be remembered that the conversion of the thief cannot be accounted for apart from the grace of God. It took place before the supernatural phenomena that bore witness to the Divinity of Jesus. The thief cried out: "Lord, remember me" before hours of darkness shrouded the earth; before the Sufferer's triumphant cry: "It is finished;" before the rending of the temple veil, the bursting of the graves, the quaking of the earth; before the Centurion's confession: "Indeed this was the Son of God" (Matt. xxvii. 54). The Almighty purposely set the conversion of the Penitent Thief before these phenomena that His sovereign grace might be recognized and magnified and His power acknowledged. He designedly chose to save this sinner under the most unfavorable circumstances that no flesh should glory in His sight.

In no other way except by Divine illumination can we account for the progress in spiritual things made by the dying thief, during the closing moments of the time he hung on the cross. It was under the tuition of the Holy Ghost that he learned of a future life, when retribution will be meted out by a righteous and sin-avenging God. This conviction caused him to sharply reprimand his companion, saying: "Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation?" (Luke xxiii. 40.) In other words: How dare you have the temerity to revile this innocent Man? Remember that you are soon to appear before another tribunal infinitely more solemn than that which sentenced you to crucifixion. Secondly, the Penitent Thief was conscious of his sinfulness. He said to his companions: "We receive the due reward of

our deeds" (Luke xxiii. 41). He admitted that he had often transgressed the Divine law; that his evil life merited punishment and that his condemnation was just. Thirdly, the Penitent Thief, confessed his belief in the Sinlessness of Christ: "This Man hath done no evil" (Luke xxiii. 41). God the Father took care to protect the spotless character of His Son. Even Judas who had betrayed Him into the hands of His enemies admitted: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood" (Matt. xxvii. 4). Pilate said of Him: "I find no cause in this Man" (Luke xxiii. 4). After handing Him over to the mob, Pilate declared: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man" (Matt. xxvii. 24). Hanging on the cross the Eternal Father opens the eyes of a robber dying by His side to see the faultlessness of His Beloved Son, and his lips to bear witness to His Excellency. All the clouds of ignominy and accusation with which His enemies had blasphemingly covered Him, could not hide from the dying thief the Divine Spotlessness and Beauty of Jesus, nor keep back that prayer which fell from his trembling lips as death was about to close them forever: "Lord, remember me, when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom" (Luke xxiii. 42). I repeat, my brethren, that the insight which this dying robber had of spiritual things was given him from on high. The Holy Ghost was his teacher. Flesh and blood had not revealed these truths to him, but the Father in Heaven.

The Savior, recognized beneath the thorn-crowned, bleeding form, and appealed to by the dying thief, made quick reply. Of the reproaches cast on Him by the mob on Calvary, He took no notice. To the insulting challenge of the priests, that He come down from the cross, He made no reply. To the request of the criminal, hanging at His left hand: "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us" (Luke xxiii. 39) no answer was given. There is no mercy, no deliverance for impenitent scoffers and hardened victims of unbelief. The

prayer of the contrite, believing criminal, dying beside Him, however, arrested His attention. He might have said in answer to his request that he was entitled to no consideration; that he had been throughout his life a wicked, a cruel robber and deserving of severest punishment for his many crimes; that he was presumptuous in thinking that a just Judge would overlook his evil deeds, because when life is at an end, when its pleasures and its possessions were slipping from his grasp and eternity with its realities was at hand, he had made an appeal for mercy. Jesus might have made this reply. He did not do so. He had come from heaven to be man's Savior. He had at all times during life manifested a tender concern for His sinful creatures and in His dying moments hanging on the cross had prayed for them, even for those who had crucified Him. No doubt He passed in review all that might be pleaded in behalf of the dying thief who now appealed to Him for mercy,—the want of religious instruction in his younger days—the neglect of parents to give him good example and proper training—the bad associations of his early youth—his own weak sense of right and wrong—the provocations of the Roman rule—his hot uncontrollable temper. These things do not justify one in doing wrong, still they were probably taken into consideration as Jesus turning to the malefactor answered loud enough for all around to hear and to know that to the end He claimed to be the Only Begotten Son of the Father as well as the true and only Mediator between God and man: "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The dying criminal had asked for a remembrance in a probably distant future. He had hoped that in the great day of the manifestation of the true Messianic royalty, the King of Israel in His glory might deign to revert to His humble companion in the dishonor and the punishment of Calvary. What an answer was accorded him! Jesus granted him above all that he asked for or thought of. He

promised that he should have a place in Paradise; that on that very day of his ignominious death he should enter upon this state of unexpected glory. "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

How consoling, my brethren, are the thoughts that the story of the Penitent Thief brings into our souls. Though he had spent a long lifetime in offending his God, he finally died in His love; with his last breath in deep contrition for his evil deeds he cried for pardon to his Savior dying by his side, and pardon was instantly granted him. This incident has been the source of joy, of hope and of strength to many a poor sinner; it has given him the necessary courage to tear himself away from evil habits and bad associates and to go in sorrow to his Merciful God. Unfortunately, for others, the mercy shown the dying thief on Calvary is looked upon as a justification of their continuance in sin. The criminal on the cross was pardoned, we are told, and these sinners expect that pardon will be extended them also in their dying moments. It is needless to say, my brethren, that these sinners are building on a weak foundation. The sacred pages make mention of none other than the Penitent Thief who was shown mercy in his dying hour. This one instance has been recorded that no sinner may despair and that none may presume. Despair and presumption are the two great rocks on which creatures are ever in danger of suffering shipwreck. The account given us by the inspired writings of the Penitent Thief's pardon, should guard us against these two dangers. It should guard us against despair, for why should anyone despair who knows of our Savior's words addressed to the dying thief: "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." It should guard us likewise against presuming on God's mercy. Who dare presume when he hears that there was another thief, on another cross, who died unconverted there. The greatest sinner who lives may be encouraged by the one,—the boldest may be deterred by the other.

THE THREE HOURS' AGONY

THE THIRD WORD

"Behold thy Mother"

"When Jesus therefore had seen His Mother and the disciple standing Whom He loved, He saith to His Mother: Woman behold thy son. After that He saith to the disciple: Behold thy Mother."—*John xix. 26.*

IN the life of our Blessed Savior, from its opening scene to its awful close, there is at all times a strange blending of the majestic and of the lowly; of the Divine and of the human. At one moment we are dazzled by some act of Christ's Divinity, and at the next see that He is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bones, and contrariwise, if He does something which impressively brings home to us His humanity, there always follows something else, to remind us that He was greater than the greatest amongst the sons of men. In our study of the Second Word spoken by Jesus from the cross, we saw our Savior as God, opening the gates of Paradise to the Penitent Thief, and now in our consideration of the Third Word He spoke whilst hanging bleeding and dying on Calvary, we are to see Him as the Son of a woman, concerned in His final moments, about her welfare.

It is generally believed, my brethren, that our Blessed Mother was not present during any of the early stages of her Son's Passion; that at the time He was in agony in Gethsemane, and afterwards when He had been seized by His enemies and led away as a criminal, to the tribunal of the High Priest, Mary was far from Him, probably kneeling in prayer in some quiet and lonely room, in the house where

Jesus had celebrated the Last Supper with His Apostles. We are not certain of the time when she left her place of retirement and prayer, in order to be present personally, as far as was possible for her, at the sufferings of her Son. That it was the will of God, for many most sublime reasons, that she should be an eye witness of much that Jesus had to suffer, cannot be questioned. The gospel of St. John makes this statement indisputable. The only thing that is uncertain in this matter, is the exact time when our Blessed Lady first appeared, after Christ's seizure by His enemies. It is commonly believed by contemplatives, that Mary first joined her Son as He was passing through the streets of Jerusalem, on His way either to, or from, the palace of Herod, and that she remained with Him unto the end. She was therefore a witness of many of the harrowing experiences which her Divine Son had to endure. She heard the sound of the scourging; saw her Child, from a distance, bound to a pillar, and beaten until He fell helpless to the pavement, whilst those standing about were spattered with His Blood. She heard the gentle murmurs, the scarcely audible bleatings of the Spotless Lamb, and would have died of broken heart, but that she was spared, for greater sufferings yet to come. She saw the eyes of the All-Seeing One blindfolded, and creatures daring to bend the knee in derision before Him, Who is one day to pronounce their endless doom. She had looked into Pilate's hall and beheld her Son, and saw that, as the prophet had said of Him, He had become a worm of the earth and no man, as His enemies had trodden Him under foot, and mangled Him, and turned Him almost out of human shape, by their atrocities. She saw Jesus, all dripping with His Sacred Blood, brought before the multitude by Pilate, in a vain endeavor to move them to pity, and heard their reply to the ruler's appeal for mercy in behalf of the Prisoner, against whom they could prove no crime: "We are not yet satisfied. Give Him to us

and we will crucify Him." When Pilate sought to reason with them further, his words were met with that wild yell of blasphemous rejection by His own people, which still rings in the ears of all who love Jesus, still echoes in history, still dwells even in heaven above, and in the soul of that Blessed Mother who heard it, in all the savage frightfulness of its reality: "His Blood be upon us and upon our children."

When Mary heard of her Son's condemnation and sentence to Crucifixion without delay on Calvary, she, accompanied by John and Magdalen, hurried away to take her station at a certain place on the road over which Jesus was to pass, that she might at least speak a word of comfort to her Child. Everywhere the streets are thronged with multitudes hurrying to Calvary, to see the Prisoner die. Heralds at the corners blow their harsh trumpets and proclaim aloud, that Jesus of Nazareth had been tried, found guilty and sentenced to die forthwith on a cross. What an awful sight met that fond mother's eyes as Jesus carrying the heavy cross approaches. He Who had been so beautiful and glorious, with the freshness of Divine innocence upon His Adorable Face, is now so changed, so deformed, so bruised, lacerated and blood-stained, that she could scarcely recognize Him. She would gladly have run to embrace her Boy; to wipe His Sacred Face; to lift from His bleeding shoulders the heavy cross, and from His aching Head, the crown of thorns, but alas! such comforts were denied her, as the soldiers, with threats and curses roughly pushed her back—and she His Mother. She shrank and shuddered as she heard the frenzied voices of the rabble, as they heaped blasphemies and maledictions upon their helpless Prisoner. She sees her Son, wearied and exhausted, fall again and again beneath His heavy load. She sees men surround Him; brutally kick Him and beat Him; swear at Him and curse Him; and drag Him

with savage ferocity to His feet again. When at last the place of Sacrifice had been reached, Christ's garments were quickly and roughly torn from His mangled body. Rudely was He thrown on the cross and nailed there. Mary heard the sound of the hammer driving the cruel spikes into the Hands out of which the world's graces flow, and into the Feet which often had been sore and weary, as they carried their Precious Burden about on His mission of love and mercy. The soldiers next stand the cross upright with Jesus affixed to it, and then drop it into the hole which had been dug for it, so roughly, that every bone of their Victim was dislocated, and His Sacred Body almost torn from the nails.

Jesus hangs silent upon the gibbet. His thoughts are concerned not only with His Father's glory and the redemption of sinful man, but likewise with everything which was transpiring about Him. The crime of those who had crucified Him, touched His Heart, and He became their advocate before His Heavenly Father: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Next we see Him listening to the appeal of the Penitent Thief, dying by His side, and hear His consoling assurance: "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Then, from His bed of torture, He gives a consoling, cheering and encouraging look to His Blessed Mother, standing near the foot of His Cross, in the midst of a little group of faithful friends, who still believed in Him and loved Him. Mary is His Mother. He Who agonizes on the cross is her Child. She brought Him forth and called His Name Jesus, because He would save His people from their sins. Her station beneath His cross was becoming to her who out of all generations, from amongst all women, had been chosen to be His Mother. Others might prove false to Him; His disciples might desert Him; His friends forsake Him; His nation despise, reject and crucify Him, she His Mother will be true to the last. As she stood beneath His cross her heart

was full of such grief and of such anguish as no other Mother's heart has ever known, or could know and live. In the words of the familiar hymn:

"Stabat Mater Dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrymosa
Dum pendebat Filius."

Great though was the burden which crushed Mary's devoted and immaculate heart, there was nothing hysterical or demonstrative in her demeanor; no fainting; no show of feminine weakness; no wild outcry of uncontrollable anguish. Although she hears the Jewish leaders taunting her Dying Child; the priests jeering Him and challenging Him, and sees the soldiers looking on, apparently callous and indifferent to all that is happening, she suffers in silence; not a word either of appeal, or of protest, or of grief, came from her. The part which she was to take in the Tragedy of Calvary had been foreseen and accepted by her at the time the great mystery of the incarnation was announced to her. Then she had been given a most perfect knowledge of every detail in the great act which would be consummated with the death of her Child. Throughout her life, Calvary and its horrors was always before her. When at one time a wave of popular feeling seemed to be bearing Jesus to a throne; when His disciples were quarreling amongst themselves over places of prominence in His Kingdom; when the streets of Jerusalem were thronged by her citizens, anxious to do Him honor, and crying aloud, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed be He Who comes in the Name of the Lord," Mary's heart was shadowed by apprehension, because she knew of Calvary and its Victim. She knew the necessity of her Son's Death for the redemption of mankind, and for the restoration to God of the glory of which sin had robbed Him; she knew all its consequences, both in time and in eternity. She knew her Child

would be taken from her in the very bloom of His youth; be condemned as a criminal and sentenced to die on a cross. She knew He would be dragged through the streets like a felon; torn to pieces and covered with countless wounds; treated like a poor, wounded animal which had been run down and preyed upon by hounds. She saw however, in the rage of those who would persecute her Son and nail Him to the cross, no accidental outbreak of human cruelty or of diabolical malice, but the execution of a sentence which God's justice had imposed. With every incident in the life of her Son she had been made acquainted. She had knowingly and freely consented to become His Mother although she knew a sword of grief should pierce her soul.

It is not, however, the Sorrows of Mary that the Church wishes us to consider today, but rather the impression made on Jesus Himself by His Mother's presence and feelings at the foot of His Cross. He Who alone knew the greatness of her love, could know the intensity of her sorrow. He looked down upon her from the cross and with an unpreoccupied eye that was able to disengage its attention from every other object by which it was solicited. He had reached that period of His career, when one might be excused from thinking of anything else but His own affairs. He was suffering too, an extremity of pain, such as would naturally tend to render Him insensible to everything besides Himself. Or if He still had composure enough to think, a dying man has many things to reflect upon within His own mind. Christ we know had a whole world of interests to attend to, for now He was engaged in a final struggle with the problem, to which His life had been devoted. The prayer in behalf of His enemies does not surprise us so much, for it may be said to have been a part of His office, to intercede for sinners. Nor is His address to the Penitent Thief to be wondered at, for this also was quite in harmony with His work as Savior. But we do

wonder that in such an hour He had leisure to attend to a domestic detail of ordinary life. Men who have been engaged in philanthropic schemes, have not infrequently been forgetful of the claims of their own families on their attention, and have excused themselves, or excuse has been made for them, on the ground that public interests predominated over the rights of dear ones. Now and then Our Lord Himself had acted and spoken as if this were His view. He would not allow His plans to be interfered with even by His Mother. At the marriage feast of Cana, when Mary brought to His notice the fact that there was no wine on hand for the guests, Jesus replied: "What is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come" (John ii. 4). That same Son, dying on the cross, would declare to all generations that though He could not but oppose any unjust interference of His Mother with plans laid out by His Eternal Father, He had never forgotten even for a moment, and never would forget, her just claims, or her true interests. In spite of His greatness and in spite of His work, He still remained Mary's Son, and bore to her an undying affection. So, in that darkest and saddest hour, He looked from the cross upon her Whom He loved more than all the world beside. He recalled the smiles and caresses of Bethlehem; the dangers and hardships of the flight into Egypt; the struggles and privations of Nazareth; the anxieties, and the loneliness she had undergone during the three years He had devoted to His Public Mission. He thought too of her present grief; of the future days of mourning and of solitude, during twenty more long years, and in the midst of His torments He provided for His Mother's comfort. He thought too, of the disciple who next to His mother was dear to Him, and He left him the dearest treasure, the richest legacy on earth. The words spoken by Jesus on this occasion were few as possible. The account of the incident given us by the evangelist reads: "When Jesus therefore had seen His

Mother and the disciple standing Whom He loved, He saith to His Mother: 'Woman, behold thy son.' After that He saith to the disciple: 'Behold thy Mother' " (John xix. 26).

Some have thought it strange that Jesus should on this occasion address Mary as "woman" rather than "mother." He did this lest He should more deeply wound her bleeding heart, by the sweet title of mother, and likewise, lest He should expose her to the rudeness of the surrounding rabble. But the chief reason why, instead of "mother" Jesus used the more general term "woman" lies much deeper here, as on the occasion of the marriage at Cana of Galilee. Our Divine Savior certainly meant His Mother to understand, that as He was preparing, as Lord of Lords, to ascend to the throne of eternal majesty, henceforward His earthly connection with her, must give way to a superior one. But while endeavoring to elevate Mary's mind above the sphere of merely human conceptions into a higher region, Jesus does not forget, either that He is her Son, or that she is His dear and sorely-tried Mother. He is desirous in His filial forethought and as far as practicable, to fill up for Mary, even in a human respect, the void which His decease would leave in her life, and give her instead of Himself, a son to assist her, a son in whom she might place entire confidence, and on whose shoulders she could lean in all her distresses, cares and sorrows. It might have been expected that He would charge St. John with the office. Who of all the Apostles could He choose, but the disciple Whom He loved? Who else but the Virgin Disciple, should be entrusted with the Virgin Mother? To what other home could she go, but to the home of him who was particularly dear to her Son? There was no arm on which His Mother could lean so confidently, as that of him, who had leaned on her Son's breast. He of all the Apostles was generous, strong, sympathetic; ever doing tender and loving service to his Master, and to him who loved Jesus

best, shall be entrusted the solemn duty of caring for Christ's Mother. Precious was the privilege of that holiest of Apostles, in protecting in her declining years, the Mother of the world's Redeemer. Virgin Mother! Virgin Son! Henceforth to be together; to recall the words, the acts, the promises of the Master and to find a bond of sympathy in His love.

But if Jesus gave Mary a great gift, in giving her St. John for a son, He gave him no less a gift in giving him such a mother: "Behold thy mother." It is not difficult, my brethren, to grasp the meaning of these words, especially for us who live at the end of so many centuries since they were spoken. If we ask how have these words of Jesus from the cross in reference to His Mother, been understood and what results have they produced, the whole history of Christianity answers us. The Church founded by the Savior to teach His truths during all time, has never allowed that Mary was a personal gift to the blessed Apostle, whose duties were confined to him and ended with him. The records of all the ages gone by, attest that Mary has ever been regarded as a Queen in the Kingdom of her Son, and by His special appointment, the tender, loving, compassionate and merciful Mother of each one, for whom the Savior died. The words then of the dying Redeemer are for us as they undoubtedly were for St. John words of sweetest consolation. In uttering them Jesus was thinking of you and of me. Of course the beloved disciple was privileged above all others, inasmuch as he alone took the Mother of Jesus into his own house, and cared for her as his own mother. But it is the conviction of Holy Church that John represented the entire human race; that in the name of us all, he received the consoling message: "Behold thy Mother." By consenting to the Incarnation of the Son of God, Mary had already become our Mother. And now, before departing, Jesus solemnly proclaims her—the

second, the better Eve—to be spiritual mother to all those for whom He was Redeemer. The words used by Our Savior in making this appointment: “Behold thy Mother,” are to be taken not merely as an instance of tender filial solicitude, but also as a last act of love on the part of the Dying Savior intending to embrace the whole world.

If such be the significance of the words spoken by Jesus from the cross, of His Mother, then each one of us should place himself under Mary’s maternal care. As she is anxious about the salvation of every soul for Whom her Divine Son suffered and died, we should go to her in our needs and especially in trying moments when temptations are strong, when burdens are heavy, when afflictions are crushing us to the earth, when darkness hovers over our pathway. We cannot for a moment question Mary’s influence with her Son. We know from Holy Scripture that intercessory prayer is an ordinance of the Almighty God. He has made it a duty for us to pray for others, and has declared the prayers of others to be beneficial for us. The Apostles frequently exhorted their converts to pray for them, and enjoined on them the duty of praying for one another. The Scriptures tell us also that the efficacy of intercessory prayer depends on the goodness and merit of the one who offers it. How great then must be the power of Mary in heaven! Again, if the closeness with which one was privileged to associate with the Savior on earth be a criterion whereby to judge of the place now occupied by that soul in heaven and of the prerogatives there granted, Mary must occupy a position in the court of her Son such as has been given to none other, and have power there befitting her dignity on earth. If the Divine Word by Whom all things were made was subject to her here, and if she ruled Him Who rules the universe, it is but reasonable to believe that she has influence over Him now in heaven; that He continues to treat her as a Mother, that He grants

requests which she now presents to Him, because He granted so promptly those which she had addressed to Him on earth. If He wrought His first miracle to give her pleasure, and if He did this in spite of the fact that His hour had not yet come, it is but reasonable to suppose that Mary still continues to call His attention to the wants of her clients, and that He continues to supply them at her word. If the share which belonged to Mary in the work of our salvation was present to the mind of Christ even in the trying hour of His Agony, so that His last words from the cross to each one of us were: "Behold thy Mother," it is but right for us to recognize an office so set forth; to regard Mary as our Mother; to cry to her in our needs and to tremble lest we should forfeit that maternal care and protection which Jesus wills she should extend to all His children.

THE THREE HOURS' AGONY

THE FOURTH WORD

"And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—*Matt. xrvii. 46.*

THE Crucifixion of the Lord of Glory was the most extraordinary event that has ever happened on earth, and the cry of the Suffering One: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" was the most startling utterance of that appalling scene. The word "forsaken" used by Our Savior, is amongst the most tragic in human speech, and yet there was scarcely any period in Christ's earthly career, when it would not fittingly describe His sad condition. Hardly had the angelic voices proclaiming an event bringing glory to God on high and peace on earth to men of good will been hushed, than creatures were proclaiming their rejection of the New-Born Savior. Afterwards, His fellow-townsmen of Nazareth, forsook Him and His cause. Ultimately, the nation at large followed the same course. The multitude, which at one time gathered around Him and hung with rapture on His every word, eventually deserted Him. At last, in the crisis of His career, one of His nearest and most trusted followers betrayed Him, and the rest, in the moment of danger, forsook Him and fled. Such treatment necessarily saddened His Loving Heart. He was perfect Man, though God, and felt as any man placed in a similar position, would feel. Perhaps the weakest point in human character, is craving for sympathy. Probably the hardest thing which we creatures are called upon to bear, is coldness or aversion, on the part of those for whom we would die. Jesus had come on earth to

serve and save men, and surely was entitled to their sympathy. He felt keenly the ingratitude of those Whom He had favored. We are now to study in the Fourth Word spoken by Our Dying Lord from the cross, the most frightful of all His miseries—His rejection by His Heavenly Father: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

The announcement of Jesus' rejection by His Heavenly Father was made shortly before His Death, or about three o'clock in the afternoon. We cannot say with certainty, how long He had been hanging on the cross. It is evident that He must have hung for some time before the sixth hour or noon. The railing of the multitudes gathered about Him, the casting of lots by the soldiers for the garments of Jesus; the conversion of the Penitent Thief;—the address of Jesus to His Mother and to St. John the Beloved Disciple, all took place before the arrival of midday. It is not, therefore, chronologically correct to speak of "the three hours agony on the cross." The evangelists, before recording the Fourth Word spoken by Jesus, tell us that during the Three Hours which had preceded this utterance, darkness had spread over the whole earth; that the sun had no sooner attained its meridian splendor on that First Good Friday, than it suddenly withdrew its beams, as if the earth were no longer worthy of its light, and that soon gloomy night had spread itself like a funeral pall, not only over the land of Judea, but over the whole universe, fulfilling the prophecy of Amos (viii. 9), "And it shall come to pass on that day, saith the Lord God, that the sun shall go down at midday and I will make the earth dark in the day of light." They who knew not, that the Son of God was among them working out human redemption, were suddenly stopped in their labors. Alarm fills every soul. Business stood still; the plow stayed in the furrow, and the axe paused uplifted. Though it was in middle of day when men are busiest, all made a general pause. There was

a halt in the caravan of life. The animal creation too was terrified at the awful manifestation of God's anger. The birds of the air alarmed, hastened to places of safety. The herds of the field crowded, bellowing, together. How startled were mankind! Around the great death-bed, an appropriate quiet was secured. No doubt, a shuddering awe came over the masses, that had gathered to witness the Crucifixion. They who had stood about the cross and had dared to insult the Majesty of Jesus, were paralyzed with fear. They ceased their ribaldry, and with it, their cruel exultation. They were cowed, though not convinced, even the basest of them, whilst the better sort smote their breasts and hurried away in terror to their homes to hide themselves for fear of the awful judgments they believed to be near. All was still on Calvary. Three hours passed by, during which nothing could be heard there, save the moaning of the two malefactors in their agony, and the sound made by the blood which dripped from the wounds of the dying men upon the earth below. Jesus during this time spoke not. It has been asked of what nature were the meditations of Our Savior during this period of silence and suffering. Was He in ecstasy of communion with His Heavenly Father? Not infrequently this favor had been vouchsafed dying saints, enabling them to completely disregard physical pains. The very contrary, however, was true of Jesus, at this period of His Crucifixion. When in the desert, after He had fasted forty days and forty nights and satan was permitted to approach Him and to tempt Him, His Father sent angels to minister unto Him. When in the Garden of Gethsemane His soul was sorrowful unto death and blood gushed from His pores unto the ground, an angel was sent to comfort Him. When with sad Heart had bade His loving Mother good-bye to enter upon His Public Works, and was baptized by John, God the Father, proclaimed Him, "His Beloved Son" from the clouds of heaven. But now, though

the Father has twelve legions of angels at His command, to succor, strengthen and comfort Him, yet the Father shut out from His shivering, shrinking soul every ray of light, every beam of joy, and submerged it, for a time, in a very sea of darkness unto death, like unto a loss of hope, as if His Father had done what He never could do,—banish His Beloved Son from His love and shut Him out forever from the blessed vision of peace. Think for a moment, my brethren, what this abandonment, this desolation means. The physical pains of Jesus at this time, were most intense. His many wounds were smarting under the chilly breezes which swept over the hill of Calvary; there was a burning fever in His Blood and a scorching thirst in His Mouth. He was hated by the Jews, scorned by the priests, reviled and challenged by the Pharisees, abandoned by His Apostles. There was no one near, to Whom He could turn for defense, for relief, or for comfort. Yet at the very moment of His direst need, when black despair was crushing His Soul, He turned to the Father Who loved Him with an eternal, infinite love. At that moment the light of the Father's face, which had brightened the darkness of the midnight cave at Bethlehem, which had shone in His Soul in Egypt, which had beamed on His Countenance during the long night of prayer on the mountain, was now darkened, as if changed to anger and hatred, and the Only Begotten of the Father, the figure of His substance was left hanging alone, solitary and desolate upon the cross. Out from the midst of a black tempest of wrath, indignation and judgment, which now enshrouded Him, came the amazing cry: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This cry of horror tells us that the sinless, holy, perfect Son of God, the Son Who from all eternity was in the bosom of the Father, the Son Who assumed flesh for the Father's glory, that Son in that hour upon the cross was forsaken by the Father; that the Father turned His back upon Him; hid His Face from

Him and left Him in the sunless, starless midnight of a complete and infinite repudiation; withdrew from Him every manifestation of His Fatherly love and left Him to sink under, and be swallowed up by, the endless, measureless billows of Divine wrath.

There was nothing imaginary about the desertion of Christ by His Heavenly Father. It was no fancy or delirium of mind, caused by bodily weakness or heat of fever, or near approach of death. Jesus was clear of mind even to the last. He bore up under pain, loss of blood, scorn, thirst and desolation. He made no complaint of the cross, of the nails, the crown of thorns. All tortures of body He endured in silence, but when it came to being forsaken by God, His Great Heart burst out into its *Lama sabacthani*. His grief over His Father's forsaking Him, was the greater because it was unexpected. Never before had He experienced this misfortune. Read the four evangelists through and through, and you find no other instance wherein Jesus complained of His Father having withdrawn His Presence. Quite the contrary for He declares: "I know that Thou hearest Me always." At the Last Supper He could calmly say with reference to the impending desertion of the twelve: "Behold the hour cometh and it is now come that you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me" (John xvi. 32). There was but one occasion during His life, when the Face of the Heavenly Father was hidden from the Face of His Anointed Son,—hidden, averted, turned away from that Face which is the Life of Creation and the Joy of Angels. This happened at the moment of death—a time when above all others, the support and consolation of the Father's Presence was needed by Jesus Christ as Man. Whilst there may be, apparently, times during the life of each creature when the Father's Face is hidden, this never happens when death is at

hand. God's saints, when they come to die, find Him near. Because of His Presence they can say with the Psalmist: "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with Me" (Ps. xxii. 4). Our own observation teaches us that if the Lord be absent from His people at other times, He is always with them in their final moments. These facts render the desertion of Christ on Calvary by His Father, most remarkable. Again, my brethren, death on Calvary's Cross had been accepted by the Savior as an act of obedience to the will of His Father. It was a death undeservedly suffered by a Sinless Son, for rebellious and sinful children of that Father. Such circumstances, my brethren, render the desertion of Jesus on Calvary by His Father, beyond all human comprehension. The desertion came too, when Our Lord was in the darkest part of His misery. All others to Whom He might have looked for assistance in His dying hour, had forsaken Him. Judas, selected to be one of His representatives amongst men, had for thirty pieces of silver betrayed Him into the hands of those who had determined on His death. Peter, chief of His Apostles, had denied Him; the others in face of danger had left Him to His fate, whilst many more upon Whom He had showered blessings now stand with His enemies beneath the Cross. To the desertion of friends, was to be added the agony that came to Him from physical suffering. He had endured every trial, pain, insult, shame and mockery imaginable. His crowning woe came when He was forsaken by His Heavenly Father: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This acknowledgment by Jesus that His Father had deserted Him opens up to our gaze an abyss of misery—measureless, unfathomable, inconceivable. Never, my brethren, was there such loneliness. Never was there such desolation. Never was there such isolation. Never did dying soul feel as Jesus felt, when His Father's Face was hidden.

The desertion of Christ by His Heavenly Father is a mystery we cannot fathom. That God the Son, having become man, should be abandoned by His Father; that His sinless soul should be darkened, the vision of the Godhead blotted out; that a storm of desolation and abandonment by God should sweep over the calm and beautiful soul of Christ, till the very unity of the Godhead seemed shattered, till the Second Person of the Triune God seems abandoned by the other two, in the tempest of darkness and wildest despair which engulf the Sacred Heart of Christ, is incredible. Yet the awful words: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" would seem to imply this, were it possible. Whilst we cannot understand what this forsaking of Christ by His Father really was, we do know that there could not be even a momentary separation between the Person of the Father and the Person of the Son. We know too, that there could not be in Jesus Christ a disuniting of the two natures; a severance of the bond between the Godhead and Our Lord's Sacred Humanity. Whilst we know but very little of the nature of Our Lord's desertion by His Father, of this we may be certain, that it was the most terrible, the most heart-rending of all the sufferings endured by the Savior; that in some awful, mysterious manner, the Redeemer was made to face the deepest desolation which ever swept over human spirit; the bitterest sorrow which ever flooded the soul of man; the keenest grief that ever racked with paroxysms of pain a human life. The reason for this torture, you know, my brethren, was that Jesus on Calvary carried the load of human transgressions. He was the Innocent Lamb of God. His stainless human nature had never been defiled by the blight of original sin. Actual sin could not touch that soul, purer than the driven snow on highest mountains, whiter than unsullied foam cresting the waves of the salt tropical sea. His spotless purity is beyond all words, beyond all thoughts. The sanctity

of angelic hosts and the unspeakable holiness of His own sweet Mother are but blemishes compared to His holiness. He is the only one of all the generations of men who, in the fullest sense could challenge the world to convict Him of sin, yet, hanging on the cross, He is drenched and saturated with crime. The sins of all mankind, not only in the past, in all their number, kind and malice, but the uncounted sins of every yet unborn age that is to live till the end of time, have been laid upon His mangled shoulders. The words of Sacred Scripture mean nothing else: "Who His own self bore our sins in His Body upon the tree; that we, being dead to sins should live to justice; by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter ii. 24). "Him who knew no sin, He hath made sin for us, that we might be made the justice of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). His offended Father having transferred to Him all the sins that had been committed from the beginning as well as the many that would be committed until the end of time, no longer regards Him as that Beloved Son in Whom, He had declared Himself, from the cloud on Mount Thabor, as being well pleased. Instead He sees before Him a culprit upon whose head lie the iniquities of all men; the foul idolatries and horrible abominations of the pagan world; the rebellions and treasons of His favorite people, as well as the black ingratitude and awful sins of the many whom the Savior's Blood would rescue. Each of these ingredients, every particle of this mass of turpitude, is now for the first time heaped upon one Head, and bury from the Father's sight the high dignity of Him Whom they oppress. All the feelings of hatred which these sins must excite in the Father are concentrated against this Representative of crime. The indignation which sent a flaming sword to chase our first parents from Paradise; the wrath which drowned in the deluge the entire race of man, the detestation which had rained fire and brimstone upon sinful cities, find a common channel into

which they pour their burning stream and so satisfy Infinite Justice. As the peculiar punishment of sin, is abandonment of the sinner by God, the offended Creator saw fit at this time to withdraw His presence from His Suffering Son, as if to crush with His vengeance, Him upon Whom had been laid the iniquities of mankind. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Although this terrible dereliction on Calvary is a mystery hidden in that deep mystery of the Incarnation, by which being true God and true Man, the Word Incarnate possesses and exercises both Divine and human operations; though too, it is beyond us fully to comprehend how His Soul, ever beautiful by the direct vision of God, could yet feel most truly and really the sense of utter forsakenness and abandonment by His Eternal Father, which caused that bitter lament to come forth from His overburdened and anguished Heart, yet this is clear, and this is what concerns us most and concerns us personally—it was your sins and my sins of thought, word, deed and omission that caused Our Savior's awful dereliction and desolation of soul in that moment of supreme agony. Bear in mind too, my brethren, that the withdrawal of the Father's Presence from His Beloved Son, was a more appalling exhibition of His hatred of sin and of His purpose to punish the sinner, a more emphatic affirmation of His regard for His own righteous government and His jealousy for the purity and happiness of the moral universe, a more powerful appeal to the conscience of mankind, a more effectual preventive of evil-doing and a more glorious guard to virtue, than could have been furnished in the utter reprobation and ruin of the whole apostate race. Had all the teeming millions of earth's guilty population from Adam to his latest son, been cast alive into the lake of fire, their hopeless anguish would have been a far less impressive display of the Divine Holiness, than was the withdrawal of His Presence from Him Who carried upon His

Shoulders the sins of the world; and their weeping and wailing throughout all the ages of reverseless doom, would have been a far less terrific demonstration of the Divine Justice than the cry of Jesus from the Cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Again, my brethren, before concluding our meditation upon the Fourth Word of Jesus from the cross, we cannot help thinking how near His experience on Calvary—apparently deserted by His Heavenly Father—brings Him to us. Like Him, many of you, no doubt, have often in your lives had to endure sorrow, misery, bereavement and that anguish of soul which comes to him who feels that the Face of his Father in heaven is hidden. Such trials come to every life; they are sent out of love to try and to prove you. The soul that knows no struggle is the soul that is dead in sin. It is easy for one to row with the current for the devil rows with him, but to face the mad rushing, dashing waters requires his best effort, aided by the help of God. In the struggle which all must make, who are followers of Jesus, it is necessary to be always watchful, trusting and hoping for help from on high, and prepared for a feeling of failure—that darkness of desolation which shrouded your Savior on Calvary. In that supreme moment, your dying Lord though overcome by the sense of desolation, cried out, "My God, My God." There was trust, not despair; faith not doubt, in that cry. It was prompted by the intense love of the Son for the Father, that ever longs for Him, that cannot bear one moment of separation from Him. Let us take home this lesson of Trust in God taught us by Christ in His awful Agony. If in our lives there should be times of trial, of darkness, when God will seem far off, hidden in the clouds that encompass us, we must never doubt or despair, of His Presence. We may be abandoned by the world's favor; the friendship of creatures; earthly prosperity; bodily strength; our Father in heaven will never forsake us.

THE THREE HOURS' AGONY

THE FIFTH WORD

"Afterwards Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished that the Scriptures might be fulfilled said: 'I thirst.'"—*John xix. 28.*

THE last word considered by us was the expression of Christ's Agony of Mind at the sense of separation from His Eternal Father. Quickly following it, perhaps but an instant after it, came the next utterance of our Dying Savior, a cry which showed His Bodily Suffering, His Perfect Human Nature and the Reality of the Crucifixion. It was now about the ninth hour or three o'clock in the afternoon. For six hours had Jesus been hanging on the cross, the last three of which had been in dense darkness, veiling His sufferings from those about Him. Now, darkness has disappeared; the sun shines again and heaven once more looks kindly down upon the earth. We would be mistaken were we to suppose that when the clouds had cleared away the agonizing darkness which had shrouded the Redeemer's soul was also lifted, and that His sufferings had come to an end. The Sacred Scriptures make such a conclusion impossible by telling us that it was at this time the Patient Sufferer made acknowledgment of physical pains and called on creatures for pity and relief: "Afterwards Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled said: 'I thirst'" (*John xix. 28*). In this torture all the physical sufferings of Christ reached their climax.

Probably eighteen hours had gone by since our Savior's seizure in Gethsemane. During this time no sleep had given

Him refreshment; no food had passed His lips, nor had drink moistened them. Even before His apprehension by His enemies, His Sacred Heart had been so convulsed with grief that His Blood gushed from every vein, onto the ground, forming pools at His Feet. After His seizure in the garden one torture followed quickly upon another. Earth and hell seem to do their utmost to add to His pains. During the brutal scourging He was bound securely to a pillar and whipped until He fell in a faint. The scourges had cut their way deep down into His Flesh opening a thousand wounds from which the Blood flowed constantly, until it seemed as though every drop had been drained from His veins and arteries. At the time of His condemnation to death on a cross, He was already so exhausted that it was feared by His enemies He would not have sufficient strength to reach the spot selected for His Crucifixion. Because of the fear that He would die on the way to Calvary they compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross to which Jesus was to be nailed. After having gone through the terrible tortures of the Crucifixion, He hung for several hours in agony with the pitiless rays of the sun beating down on His thorn-crowned Head. Then followed three hours of darkness, during which the Father's Face had been turned away from Him, as He endured the fierceness of His outpoured wrath. That night and that day were hours into which an eternity was compressed. Yet during it all not a single murmur passed Christ's lips. There was no complaining, no begging for mercy, no appeal for pity, no request for the alleviation of His sufferings—not a word that would give one an idea of the intensity of the agonies He was enduring. All His tortures, both of body and of mind, were born in majestic silence. As the prophet had said of Him: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer and He shall not open His Mouth" (Is. liii. 7). It was not surprising that

after all Our Blessed Lord had suffered, a dreadful fever should rage throughout His frame and cause Him to long for a drop of water and to cry out: "I thirst." This, the Fifth Word spoken by Jesus from the cross was the first and only acknowledgment of physical pain which fell from His Lips. The evangelists in their accounts of the awful treatment He had received from the time of His apprehension in Gethsemane until He closed His eyes on Calvary are all silent concerning any other admission of physical suffering made by the dying Savior. Up to the time He cried out: "I thirst" the deepest point in His humiliation had been His confession to the world that His soul was in darkness. Now, however, in acknowledging His wants and calling on man for help, He descends to a still lower depth of humiliation. Often before in His public ministrations He had felt the needs and limitations even of Perfect Humanity. Many nights came upon Him when He knew not where to lay His Head (Matt. viii. 20) as man, though the Maker and Ruler of all things. Frequently had He felt the pangs of hunger (Matt. iv. 2) though He is "The Bread of Life" (John vi. 48). He had sat by Jacob's well wearied with His journey (John iv. 6) though He is our Rest, and had said to the woman of Samaria who had come to draw water: "Give Me to drink" (John iv. 7) though He is the Maker of the ocean and of the waters that are above the firmament. Now, helpless on the cross He declares again that He longs for a drink of water. How truly man, He is my brethren,—“bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh”;—brother to the poorest and to the humblest of our race.

Not one of you, my brethren, but has an idea of the awfulness of the sufferings which thirst causes in the human frame. Often have you read of the condition to which shipwrecked sailors were reduced when they had nothing to drink. Though all about them the ocean rolled and tossed they dare not drink

of its salty waters and must slowly await the end, dying in a delirium of thirst. You have doubtless read of the terrible tortures that come to travelers in crossing deserts where no water is to be had; how one overcome by thirst there will gladly give up everything he possesses on earth, for a few drops of even muddy, foul undrinkable water; how, should he discover at a distance what seemed to be a pond or a lake, he will rush towards it like a madman, and should it turn out to be, as frequently is the case, but a burning, sandy surface on which the sun's rays play, he will sink to the earth in despair and finally will die an awful death. Many of you perhaps have stood by the bed-side of one in the throes of a burning fever. You saw his face on fire; his hands tremulously throbbing with boiling blood and nervously clutching the bed clothes; his lips dry and cracked like bare and barren soil that has been baked and blistered by sultry drought; his tongue parched and swollen and unable to articulate. You saw the convulsive eagerness with which the sufferer clutched the cup placed to his lips, hoping it would extinguish the inner fires which were consuming him. Such, my brethren, was the condition of Our Blessed Savior at the time the Fifth Word was spoken from the cross. It is considered that the torture caused Him by thirst, was the most intense of all the physical sufferings He had to endure on Calvary.

It would appear from the gospel narrative that some of those who heard the appeal of Jesus were opposed to easing His sufferings in any way. This was the treatment they would mete out to Him Who in the beginning created the rivers and brooks and springs that His creatures might not thirst. And if it sometimes happened that the supply of water failed, the Creator was ready to work miracles lest His children should suffer. Ismael thirsted and God showed Agar a fountain; the people of Israel were at one time perishing for want of water and He opened up in a rock a refreshing

stream. He gave to Moses a rod to make bitter water sweet and drinkable. When in the fullness of time He became Man and dwelt amongst His creatures, He proclaimed to all who were thirsty: "If any man thirst let him come to Me and drink" (John vii. 37). When, however, this Bountiful Creator was hanging on the cross and asked for water to moisten His parched lips, He was refused. In the crowd that stood around their dying Lord and heard His last appeal for pity, one only stepped forward, not, however, to relieve and comfort the Sufferer, but to mock Him and to add to His miseries. He took a sponge, and having fastened it to a rod filled it with vinegar and reached it up to the burning lips of Jesus. It has been claimed by some that this man was actuated by the tenderest impulses of humanity; that he really pitied the Sufferer and was anxious to relieve Him. This theory is contrary to the generally accepted belief. St. Luke (xxiii. 36) explicitly tells us that the vinegar was offered Jesus in mockery. Such would seem to be the natural inference from the act. Were one thirsty a drink of vinegar would give him no relief. An external application of vinegar may assist in restoring consciousness, or it may sometimes allay the pain of an aching head, but to one suffering the extreme pangs of thirst, no person moved by feelings of mercy would give a drink of vinegar. This mockery of our expiring Lord was the crown and complement of the many that had gone before it. It would be hard to imagine a more consistent, a more cruel ending to all He had suffered from His executioners than that, after exhausting their malice in every imaginable manner of torturing Him, they should give Him vinegar to drink in His dying moments.

The thirst of which Jesus complained on the cross was not only a physical but a spiritual thirst as well. He longed indeed for a drink of water as any creature in His condition would have done, but beyond and above this thirst of His feverish

Body, was His thirst for the souls of creatures—His desire to draw them all to His love and service. This thirst had brought Him from heaven; had been characteristic of His life, inspiring everything He had done on earth. None knew as He how sin had separated the creature from the Creator and necessitated His awful death. His mind travels back to the rebellion of the angels on the battlements of heaven; to Adam's fall in the garden and the banishment of our first parents from that earthly paradise. He sees the whole human race through Adam's transgression infected with the foul leprosy of sin. He watches the growth of wickedness eating into the lives of millions until His Heavenly Father declared that He repented having made man. Whilst the sins of all peoples, not only of past ages but of centuries unborn were present to the mind of Christ, He was particularly concerned with those of the Jews of His own time. He had come from heaven to work amongst them. All familiar with His life know how, on the one hand, He had labored to bring about their conversion and on the other how His efforts had been fruitless. It is true that in the beginning He attained a widespread popularity. Everywhere He went, multitudes gathered around Him. Wherever He spoke, crowds hung upon His words, and as He ceased acknowledged: "Never did man speak like this Man" (John vii. 46). His miracles, they recognized as being the credentials of a Teacher sent from God, and yet they would not receive Him. To justify their opposition, and their determination to put Him to death, they brought all manner of false charges against Him. They accused Him of being a glutton and a wine-bibber (Luke vii. 34); of being in league with Beelzebub (Matt. xii. 24); of being actually possessed by the devil (John vii. 48). They finally dragged Him before the civil tribunal and had Him condemned to death on a cross. Jesus, though He had been hated, dogged, misrepresented, calumniated, plotted against

and unjustly condemned, to the end, desired their salvation. It mattered not, that all His appeals in the past had been unheeded; that they had dragged Him as a criminal before their tribunals and sentenced Him to die; that He had been rejected in favor of an infamous robber; had been publicly scourged, crowned with thorns and nailed in ignominy to the cross, by the cry "I thirst" spoken in His dying moments from His bed of suffering, Jesus would have His enemies know that to the end, in spite of all they had done against Him, He loved them and longed for their salvation. What consoling revelation of God's love for His creatures does this Fifth Word of Jesus from the cross give us, my brethren. It assures us that Our Father in Heaven thirsts for our love, our service and our eternal welfare. This assurance alone, Our Savior supposed, should be motive sufficient to draw all creatures to God. There was no recalling the warnings, the Almighty in the past, had found it necessary to give sinners—speaking to them from darkened clouds and in the lightning, as well as in the thunder. There was no reminding them that He Who is to pass judgment on their lives is the God of inexorable justice, Who had opened the flood gates of heaven to drown a sinful world. The words "I thirst" heard by those who crowded Calvary's heights declare that the Old Dispensation with its rigors and exactions had passed and gone, having been replaced by a new law introduced by Him Who was then dying before them—the Christ, the Reconciler, the Redeemer of mankind. During the three years immediately preceding His Crucifixion, He had gone about in their midst, showering blessings upon them. He had touched the ears of the deaf and they heard again; the tongues of their dumb and they spoke once more; the eyes of their blind and sight returned. He had laid hands on their lepers and they were healed; on their dead and life came back again. The one concern of His mission had been their welfare; to pardon

sin and to save the sinner. At all times He was meek, gentle and forgiving, even when dealing with the wicked and unworthy. No word of harshness or reproach had ever fallen from His lips. It would not be possible for creatures to have a more convincing revelation of their Heavenly Father's love for them than the life lived by Jesus on earth. Now that life is ending before their eyes. Jesus is dying on a cross to which they had nailed Him. Once again He assures them of His love in the words: "I thirst."

Again, my brethren, Jesus by His declaration "I thirst" would have us to know that in His dying moments He yearns for the salvation of every one whom His Heavenly Father had created. This knowledge whilst full of consolation for us, likewise reminds us of the awful responsibility that comes to us because of our membership in God's Church. Jesus not only desires the advancement in perfection of those who in some measure already belong to Him, but the conversion from error of the millions who wander outside the true fold. They belong to Him, and to no other. He created them. His Precious Blood redeemed them. Though they have gone astray, He is still their Shepherd, troubled because of their absence and anxious for their return to the true sheepfold. He demands from all members of His Church earnest effort in searching out and bringing back souls that are astray. There is no escaping this obligation, my brethren. You are not in sympathy with your dying Lord:—you are offering Him vinegar and gall in answer to His appeal for a drink of water—if you are not doing all in your power to bring others to that faith which you esteem above anything or everything else. The words: "Go ye forth and teach all nations" whilst addressed directly to the Apostles had a meaning and a force for all who stood around Him at the time they were spoken. Christ intended that they, as well as the Apostles, should understand that the conversion of the world must thenceforth

become the proper concern, the paramount business of every creature in each succeeding age.

This duty of laboring to bring about the conversion of unbelievers binding everyone belonging to the Church of Christ, is founded on that other great duty which requires you to love your fellow creature. You must love him, because you love God. You are bound to love God because your souls are His creation, made to His image, with immortal longings to satisfy and incapable of finding rest or happiness except in the eternal possession of Him. God created the souls of others also, my brethren. They too are bound to turn to Him. As He wills that you be saved, so He wills that they be saved. As He made Himself the Father, the Friend, the Redeemer, the Shepherd of each one of you, so He has done for every other soul. His Divine wish that all creatures be saved must be seconded by you. His zeal must be your model and must meet with your co-operation. St. Dionysius says: "To co-operate with God in saving souls is the most divine of all divine works." You do not truly love God unless you work for Him and with Him.

These fundamental principles must be made through life the guiding star of each one of you. Around you are thousands who by an inscrutable judgment of God are living without adequate faith. They are men and women of good dispositions. Many of them are religiously inclined. They venerate Our Divine Lord, love the Sacred Scriptures, keep God's law with greater or less fidelity, have a deep-seated zeal for the glory of their Creator and for the salvation of souls. If they ignore or reject our holy faith, it is for the most part because of the prejudices in which they were brought up. You, my brethren, do not really love Christ if you are not anxious to bring these non-Catholic friends or neighbors into the bosom of our holy Church. Jesus thirsts for these souls; so must you. Your zeal for the conversion of unbelievers

should extend likewise to heathen lands where there are millions upon millions of poor creatures made to the image and likeness of God, made for an eternity of happiness with Him in the life to come, and yet they have never heard the sweet Name of their Redeemer. He Who made the world and all things in it from nothing, has no need of your help. He could have devised other means, besides your efforts, to spread His kingdom amongst men. He has not done so, however. He has imposed the duty of bringing others to a knowledge of Him and His saving truths, on you. What a glorious privilege is yours, my brethren! It would not be possible for you to set hand or heart to a task more magnificent than the one which engaged the attention of the Father's Only Begotten Son. This task should dominate the horizon of each soul as the sun does the day. It should become the acme of vision, the one clear, shining star to which you hitch your destiny. It should be eternally the idolized dream, whose realization is life's dominant passion.

Finally sinner, your dying Savior thirst for you. Hanging on that cross Jesus sees you in the crowd that surrounds Him. His eyes are fixed on you, and on you alone. His dying lips speak to you, and to no one else. They convey a message to you from that Loving Heart. They declare that Jesus recognized you personally and individually; that He has known you always, and more intimately than you have known yourself; that He knows what it is that caused you to forsake Him, to join that blaspheming rabble; that He knows what it is keeps you from bursting away from the crowd which surrounds Him, and rushing to Him in the face of all the world and throwing yourself at His Feet and bathing them as did the Penitent Magdalen with tears of sorrow and love. Those eyes looking upon you from the cross tell you that He is suffering, but suffering gladly and cheerfully, because He loves you, and that He would not for any price,

escape a single pain, a single taunt or insult of all He has endured and is yet to endure, because of His exceeding love for you. They say too, that He is anxiously expecting you to leave the crowd and to come to Him; that He has been a long weary time awaiting your return; that He has been patient with you, when no other friend would have been patient, and that now, in His dying hour, He makes another appeal which may be the last, and begs you to give up that bad habit, to avoid that companion, make that needed sacrifice, and break through the trammels of human respect and self-indulgence and pride and vanity and sloth, to come and be His forever. Such, sinner, for you is the significance of the Fifth Word spoken by Jesus from the cross. He thirsts for your soul,—offer Him not the sponge dipped in vinegar.

THE THREE HOURS' AGONY

THE SIXTH WORD

"It is consummated."—*John xix. 30.*

THE words: "It is consummated" spoken by our dying Savior, are the most momentous and most significant words ever uttered on earth. Just at the time when all seemed irretrievably lost, Jesus declares that all had been won; everything He had contended for had been attained. At the very moment when victory, it seemed, was about to crown the plans of Christ's enemies, He announces their defeat; declares that the race of Adam was no longer under His outraged Father's curse but had been restored to His favor; that the powers of darkness were no longer in control of sinful man but had been defeated, routed and driven back; that the gates of heaven, closed for four thousand years to sinful creatures, were once more thrown open wide for souls redeemed by His Precious Blood to enter. All this, my brethren, is implied in the Sixth Word spoken by Our Dying Savior from the cross. We are now to study this word for a few minutes.

It is a plain inference from these words: "It is consummated" that Christ had been given a work to do on earth. They carry us back to another occasion when the first recorded words that fell from Our Savior's Lips were spoken. St. Luke tells us of a time when the Child Jesus had been lost for three days and was found "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions." The evangelist adds: "All that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers" (Luke ii. 47).

Nothing then said by Jesus to the doctors, has been recorded. Yet, He could hardly have spoken to them anything so wonderful as the words He addressed on that same occasion to His Mother. Her surprise that He should have lingered behind in the temple, contrasts strikingly enough with His half-concealed astonishment, that she should not understand the reason of His conduct: "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know, that I must be about My Father's business?" Even then, though but twelve years old, He knew that there was a business entrusted to Him by His Father in heaven, and was constantly and diligently engaged in the performance of its duties. Of the life lived by Jesus during this period but little has been recorded. Beyond the facts that He resided at Nazareth; was subject to His parents and "advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men" we know nothing. There is a tradition that Joseph died when Jesus was yet young and that He worked as a carpenter to support Himself and His Mother. Whilst we are not bound to accept this tradition as true, it would be rash to call it in question, especially as it coincides with that plan which we believe had been decided upon in the councils of heaven for the regulation of the Savior's Hidden Life. It is thought to have been the Almighty's will that before the full splendor of Christ's Divine gifts and Divine powers had descended upon Him, He should first live an ordinary, human life,—a life of toil, of poverty and of hardship,—as a preparation for the great duties for which He had been sent.

At the age of thirty years, Jesus left His Mother and the Home of Nazareth, to enter upon a work such as has never been undertaken on earth. There have been others, we know, who have undertaken and accomplished much for the glory of God or for the welfare of their fellowmen. History tells of patriots who have sacrificed their all, that their native land might be liberated from tyrannical rule. There have been

philosophers, who have disregarded earthly gratifications, to give their whole time and attention to enlarging the realm of human knowledge. There have been men of medicine, who have spent their days and their nights seeking remedies for human ills. There have been discoverers, who have devoted their lives to seeking out, exploring and opening up untrodden continents. In every age since the command went forth, "Go teach all nations" noble souls have been inspired to leave home, its comforts and its dear ones, to make known to benighted heathens the glad tidings of salvation. For all these benefactors of our race, the world has admiration. Whilst time endures, the recalling of their names and their deeds, will stir a feeling of gratitude and veneration within human hearts. Yet, my brethren, the end at which these heroes aimed cannot even in the remotest may be compared with the work which brought Jesus from heaven. He came to do what no creature could do; what the combined efforts of all creatures could not accomplish—restore the human race to its Creator's love. This is implied in the Name given by His Father at the Circumcision: "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). This work of saving creatures from their sins, for which the Redeemer had come, was greater than that act of the Divine Will which from nothing had called creation into being; greater than that continued act of Providence by which all things are kept in existence,—the stars in their courses, atoms in cohesion and worlds of flesh and of spirit in their mutual relations. This work of saving rebellious sinners had been planned by God the Father and accepted as planned, by God the Son. The sense of having been charged with its performance by His Heavenly Father was the one controlling thought of Our Savior's life. When at the well of Sichar His disciples offered Him food, He said to them: "I have meat to eat which you know not. My meat is to do the will

of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work" (John iv. 32). On His last journey to Jerusalem, after having told His Apostles of the awful things which were to happen Him there, He amazed His disciples by boldly leading the way, fearless of consequence, bent only on doing His Father's will. This one purpose possessed Him even in the face of danger or of certain disaster, as at all other times. He was ever in it, body, soul and spirit. He bestowed on it all His energies,—every moment of His time. "I must work the works of Him that sent Me whilst it is day" (John ix. 4). "He that sent Me is with Me and He hath not left Me alone; for I do always the things that please Him" (John viii. 29). During His last discourse to His Apostles He said, speaking to His Heavenly Father: "I have glorified Thee on earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John xvii. 4). A short time after, when dying on the cross He cried out: "It is consummated," suggesting to all who heard Him, the idea of a prescribed, a distinct, a definite work brought to a final, satisfactory and triumphant conclusion. In effect He said, the work for which I offered Myself,—to which My Heavenly Father appointed Me,—has been finished, consummated; all done, everything completed; nothing left undone that should have been done; everything done at exactly the right time, in the right place and as My Father had planned it. I have offered an infinite, a superabundant satisfaction for human guilt and in consequence of My Sacrifice, the gates of heaven are again unbolted, that souls rescued from the servitude of sin and satan, may enter to participate in My Father's glory, happiness and eternal life.

The words "It is consummated" had another signification. They referred those who listened to them to writings which they believed to be nothing less than God's revelation to man. These writings tell in unmistakable language that at the time the offended Creator pronounced the sentence which banished

Adam and Eve from the terrestrial paradise and sent them forth to be toilers and sufferers and wanderers on the face of the earth, He spoke a word of hope to cheer and comfort the guilty pair. They were told that a daughter of their race would one day crush the head of him who had estranged them from their God; that a Savior born of woman would come to them, take away their crime, by paying the penalty exacted by Divine Justice and restore them and their posterity to the Creator's friendship (Gen. iii. 15). This promise made to Adam and Eve by God Himself was afterwards repeated again and again as the centuries rolled by. In order that it might continue to be the source of religious life to His chosen people until the time for its fulfillment had arrived, the Almighty raised up saintly men to whom He gave the gift of prophecy, that they might prepare the world for the coming of this Promised Savior. These Prophets, through the inspiration of heaven were enabled to see centuries before occurrence, a series of wonderful events, contrary to the laws of nature and to all probability, and all associated with the Birth, Life and Death of Him Whom heaven was to send, to bring Redemption to Israel. These divine oracles pointed out the time when this Promised Savior should appear on earth; named the little town where He would be born; told of the tribe and the family from whom He would take His origin. They also entered into many details of this Redeemer's life. They declared that His life would be above reproach; that He should be an exceptionally pure and holy servant of God; that He should likewise be a marvelous teacher: teaching as one having authority from on high; that He should be a friend of the wretched, of the outcast, of the sick and of the maimed; that He should give eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, tongues to the dumb, feet to the lame and life to the dead; that He should be meek and gentle and tender and loving; that He should be a rebuker of sin, incor-

ruptible, the supreme champion of righteousness; that He should have a following from among the poor and lowly, whilst hated and persecuted by the rich and mighty; that He should be a great sufferer, a man of sorrows, tramped upon as a worm of the earth; that He should be betrayed by one in Whom He would trust and sold to His enemies for thirty pieces of silver; that He should give His Back to be scourged and His Cheek to be smitten; that He should be spit upon; that He should be silent and submissive like a sheep in the hands of his shearers; that His Hands and Feet should be pierced; that His enemies would taunt Him in the midst of His sufferings with words of reproach and derision; that in His thirst they would give Him vinegar to drink; that His clothing would be distributed amongst His executioners, except His seamless garment for which they would cast lots; that in addition to His physical sufferings, His agony of soul should be intense; that in His dying moments He should cry out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

I have made reference, my brethren, to a few of the many statements concerning a coming Messiah which crowd the pages of the Old Testament. Wherever we turn we find that the idea of a Savior Who would bring Redemption to Israel was underneath and over all, through the whole grand structure of prophetic teaching. Jesus dying on the cross recalls everything the Prophets had predicted concerning the expected Redeemer, and declares that all had been fulfilled in Him. Those about Him should have understood the meaning of His words since He reminded them of truths with which they were all familiar. He referred them to sacred writings which they regarded as the revelation of God, every page of which spoke of Him and His work. Thousands of years before that time when He was dying in agony before their eyes, these scriptures had told of His coming; told where He would be born; named the tribe and the family from Whom

He would descend. They told also that He would be a sufferer and exhibited the hideous instruments of His torture—the cross, the nails, the hammer, the scourges, the gall, the vinegar, the blows—and kept the universe in expectation of a prodigious event, an extraordinary spectacle, the like of which had never been heard of since time began. Jesus of Nazareth had appeared at the very moment marked out by the Prophets for the coming of this Expected One. He was born in the very city which had been named as the Redeemer's birthplace. He fulfilled every prediction made concerning Him. He performed, even to the minutest particular, every deed which the Prophets had declared He would perform, and must be none other than the One Who had been sent to bring salvation to Israel. All this, my brethren, is implied in the Sixth Word spoken by Jesus from the cross: "It is consummated."

The Sixth Word spoken by Jesus from the cross reminds you, my brethren, of the most important affair in which you are to figure. It assures you that a time is to come when your lives shall be submitted to the scrutiny of the All-Knowing One. There is no article of your holy faith more certain than this. Reason itself, independent of revelation, teaches that it must be true. You know there is a God above. You cannot honestly question His existence, for He is seen wherever you turn your gaze. You see Him in the boundless magnitude and harmonious arrangement of all his works. If you lift your eyes above and view the blue ethereal vault, bespangled by all the variety and retinue of world upon world; to the immensity of suns, systems and globes with all their stupendous magnitude, glorious splendor or harmonious and sublime movements; or to the earth laboring as it does under the curse imposed upon it, you behold sufficient to convince you that a God of infinite wisdom, power and goodness is near and about you. To one accepting this belief in a Su-

preme Being, no truth stands more conspicuously foremost, from the heights of nature and of revelation than that of our immortal destiny. While it is undeniably true from all the lights which nature with her inexhaustible and exuberant profusion has afforded; from the rich and full developments of science; from all the deep researches of philosophers, that there is a God matchless in wisdom, boundless in power and infinite in benevolence and love, it is likewise almost self-evident that this scene of existence to which we are chained by immutable and uncontrollable laws, is not the end and terminating point of all the pleasing hopes and fond desires that animate us in this wilderness of sorrow. We long for a home that will be ours forever, where trials will never come, where sorrow will never enter, where bereavement will be unknown, where adieus are never spoken and where farewells are never heard. Our Loving Creator, we know from revelation, has such a home prepared for us. It will be ours for eternity on the one condition that we be His faithful children during our days of probation here. God's holy word assures us that we have been sent into this world to perform certain duties and at the end to be rewarded for our fidelity or to be punished for our disobedience. The same Savior who declared in His dying statement from the cross that every duty which His Heavenly Father had imposed on Him had been faithfully performed will pass judgment on your lives. It will be for Him to say that you had been a faithful steward on earth and entitled to an eternal reward or an unprofitable servant and as such condemned to hell's unquenchable flames. The Sacred Pages in many passages declare that the Judge Who is to pass sentence on creatures at the end of time will be Christ, the Son of God; that when the appointed time has come, as a public vindication of Divine Justice, all creatures will be brought together in the Valley of Josaphat (Joel iii. 12), each one to hear again the sentence

that had been pronounced upon him at the moment of death. It is believed that this place of judgment is situated near the city of Jerusalem, in sight of Mount Calvary whereon the Savior shed His Precious Blood for sinners. St. Hilary is of the opinion that Christ's Judgment Seat is to stand upon the very spot where His Cross was formerly planted so that the glory of His Divine Majesty may be made manifest in the place where His Sacred Humanity suffered every possible ignominy. Above the Judgment Seat will be seen the royal standard of the cross, according to the words of St. Matthew (xxiv. 30): "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven," and this to the inexpressible comfort of the just, but to the shame and confusion of the reprobate, as it will remind them, on the one hand, of that boundless love and unparalleled charity which brought the Son of God from His throne of glory and made Him obedient unto death and, on the other, of their own indifference to all He had done and suffered to insure their salvation. It is an alarming truth that should be kept ever before our minds that we will be judged by Our Savior according to the laws of strict justice. It is hard for us to realize that Christ will be so severe in passing sentence on our lives. We have become used to God's mercy during life; have often sought it and always obtained it; times innumerable we have abused it and trifled with it, and can hardly believe God will adopt a different policy in dealing with us on Judgment Day. Our Lord's words on this matter are very plain. Speaking of the final judgment He declares: "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then will He render to every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27). Be not deceived, my brethren, for these words admit of but one interpretation.

One word more, in conclusion. The important lesson taught you by the Sixth Word of Jesus from the cross is

that every one who considers himself a disciple of the dying Savior must regard as a most sacred trust the years allotted him here on earth. They have been given you to be administered in God's fear, with an eye to His glory, your own salvation, and the spiritual and temporal betterment of others. Do not fool yourself into believing that you will have discharged the mission upon which you were sent into this world, should you at the close of life escape the sentence of condemnation passed upon an unbeliever, a blasphemer, a murderer or an impure wretch. Responsibilities have been placed upon you by your Father in heaven which you cannot evade without serious sin and damnation in the life to come. Duties of religion,—worshipping your Creator, frequently and piously approaching the sacraments, assisting devoutly at Holy Mass, visiting Jesus dwelling sacramentally amongst us,—must all be accounted for. You have responsibilities to your families, to your children, to your church, to your neighbors, to those in need, to those who are not members of God's Church and to the world at large. You must account for the use you now make of your wealth, of your position, of your talents. Alas! for you, have you been given gifts and talents and do not use them, or misuse or abuse them; if you have wealth and hoard it or spend it only on yourselves or your families; if you have ability and advocate what is sinful, ridicule what is true or good, or scatter doubts concerning what is sacred; if you have leisure and waste it. Of all these possessions you are but the steward of an Unseen Lord. A day is rushing upon you when you shall be called to an accounting. The worldly fame which your deeds may have brought you; the worldly possessions which your labors, your investments, may have amassed; the worldly joys and pleasures and pastimes that consumed so much of precious time, shall be at the Judgment Seat, empty and profitless. Out of the great waste of dead years you

shall have saved those deeds only which were done for God and eternity. May the Holy Ghost inspire you, my brethren, to give these all-important truths the consideration to which they are entitled, that when the final summons comes, each one of you as he closes his eyes for a last time, may say with Jesus dying on the cross: "It is consummated," finished,—everything has been done which my Heavenly Father gave me to do.

THE 'THREE HOURS' AGONY

THE SEVENTH WORD

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."—*Luke xxiii. 46.*

GENERALLY speaking there is nothing in human experience more solemn and affecting than dying moments, when time and eternity meet each other and the creature seems to hear striking the hours of another world. How inexpressible are human feelings when one stands, even in spirit, at a deathbed such as that we are now to contemplate. Jesus after hanging for several hours upon the cross is so far dead and exhausted as to be unable, it would seem, to utter another word. At this time silence had also come over those who stood around Him. Even they who had been most active against Him, as well as they who had been most fiendish in their insults, are overpowered by an unaccountable feeling of fear and hold their peace. The Roman soldiers too, who watched Him dying ceased their jesting. Their commanding officer rose up and as under an irresistible impulse ordered silence and forthwith all was still as the tomb. Then the clouds which had gathered about Calvary became darker and denser: though it was yet early in the afternoon, not a ray of sunshine was to be seen. Suddenly and unexpectedly the dying and drooping Head of the Savior was lifted from His breast; His eyes over which the film of death had settled had become bright as crystal; a glory as of life eternal had come into His Face as with a loud voice He cried out: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." The Head then fell forward upon His Bosom—the Spirit had departed. Jesus was dead.

Death is generally regarded as man's debt to nature.

This thought, strictly speaking, is not accurate. Man, the creature of God originally owed no such debt, for his nature as it came from the hands of the Creator bade him live, not die. Death, properly speaking, is the debt which man the sinner owes to justice. It is not the natural result of his original constitution but a penal law introduced in consequence of his transgression of the Divine law. Hence it has become the established rule for man to die. "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. ix. 27). "By one man sin entered into this world and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12). Adam and Eve by their transgression of God's command brought death into this world. They were the first to behold Death display his power and majesty on their beloved Abel. Oh! what a terrible spectacle was that which they were called upon to witness! Before them their beautiful boy lay dead. The light of his eyes had been extinguished; his lips no longer uttered words of kindness and affection; his features had become pale as the lily; his limbs stiff and cold and motionless. Loudly the fond parents called him by name but there was no reply. Frantically they conjured him with tears to let them hear his voice again, but he remained silent. Before they were aware, corruption with leaden weight and a thousand horrors had taken possession of the corpse, and the father and mother in spite of all their affection for their child, were obliged to turn away from him as they realized, though only in part, what death is. From that time, when Abel succumbed to Death's power, this gloomy and universally dreaded being has continued his scourge of the earth, carrying on in every quarter and in every period of time his work of destruction; dropping gall into every cup of joy; surrounding every loving bond with mourning drapery; assuring all creatures that sooner or later the hour of their dissolution shall come.

Jesus had declared Himself to be the "Resurrection and the Life" and at the grave of Lazarus, at the bedside of the daughter of Jairus as well as before the bier of the son of the widow of Naim, had proved Himself to be Lord and Master of death, yet He would claim no immunity from that penalty imposed on man with his first transgression. The admission that His enemies would eventually overpower Him and put Him to death, was seized upon by many Jews as an indisputable argument that Jesus could not be the Promised Savior of Israel. Many passages were quoted in support of their contention. *Isaias* (Is. ix. 7) had written of the Expected One: "He shall sit upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom; to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice from henceforth and forever." *Daniel the Prophet* says of Him: "And He gave Him power and glory and a kingdom; and all peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve Him; His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away; and His Kingdom that shall not be destroyed" (Dan. vii. 14). From these and many other texts of Sacred Scripture, the Jews rightly concluded that Christ should remain forever. They erred greatly, however, in their conception of the Kingdom of which their Prophets so often speak. Their aspirations had been trained for generations to look for a great national renaissance under the reign of the Promised Messiah. They therefore scoffed at Christ and His pretensions, once they had heard Him declare He would be overcome by His enemies and put to death. As soon as possible after having heard this admission from His own lips, they nailed Him to a cross, believing that indisputable proof that He was an imposter, would be given the ages to come were He to close His eyes in death. It was this same line of thought that caused those about Calvary's cross to taunt, and ridicule and blaspheme the Sufferer. The conviction which prompted the enemies of Christ to challenge

Him in His dying moments was not altogether unshared, both before and after His Death, by many disciples of the Crucified. Some who loved Him and trusted Him, had great difficulty in reconciling the high opinion in which they regarded Him, with what He told them about His awful end. Death seemed to them to have plainly stamped upon it the marks of weakness, failure, incapacity—even that of guilt. They could not make themselves believe that He Who had called Himself the Son of God, the equal of his Eternal Father, would die. Besides this, there had been so much that was supernatural about His birth and His life, that it would seem there should be something supernatural about His departure, when His earthly mission had come to an end. They recalled that two great saints in earlier ages, had been exempted from submission to the law of death, and felt that this privilege should be extended to their Adored Master likewise. If God had taken Henoch (Gen. v. 24) up into heaven; if Elias (4 Kings ii. 11) had been carried there in a chariot of fire, was He, they asked, of whom these favored ones were only shadows, to die? Was the one Perfect Human Life to which all the ages had pointed, to be veiled at the last, like that of any sinner, in the humiliations and the weaknesses which follow in the train of death? Why call Jesus, they insisted, the Second Adam, if He does not share the original immortality of the first Adam? How look upon Him as the Savior of Men, if He Himself must pay tribute to man's last enemy? These questions at first sight seemed to be natural enough. Both the enemies and the followers of Christ regarded them as reasonable.

This explanation helps us to understand many things done and said by Christ's followers which otherwise would be inexplicable. It gives us, for example, a key to the meaning of words spoken by Peter at Cæsaria Philippi. Jesus had just told His disciples that the time was at hand when

"He must go up to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the ancients and scribes and chief priests and be put to death" (Matt. xvi. 21). Peter would not for one instant entertain the thought of such disaster overtaking His Master, whom he believed to be destined for an eternal reign of glory, and answered: "Lord be it far from Thee, this shall not be unto Thee." You will also recall, my brethren, the incident about the two disciples of Christ, who on the day of the Resurrection (Luke xxiv. 15) were joined by a Stranger on the Emmaus Road and questioned by Him. These disciples, in reply to the inquiries of the Stranger, gave Him a condensed account of the life of Jesus, whose followers they had been. They told how their hearts had centered on Him as the One Who was to redeem Israel, but that their hopes had been dashed to pieces on the previous Friday by their Master's death on a Cross. As the third day after His Crucifixion was declining they left Jerusalem with heavy hearts. The testimony of the pious women and of Peter and of John, as to the reality of Christ's Resurrection, did not for them clear up the mystery; did not disclose the whereabouts of the Great Prophet and Wonder Worker, nor explain how it could happen that He Whom they believed to be the Messiah for Whom Israel had been waiting, had submitted to the common death of mortals. This same view of Christ's Death was entertained by many others who had been His disciples. St. Paul tells us that the Jews in general, found it hard to reconcile the Crucifixion of Jesus with many statements He had made concerning Himself. Writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. i. 23), he states that the Tragedy of Calvary was to the Jews a stumbling block in the way of their believing Jesus Christ to be all that He professed to be.

To us, my brethren, the death of Jesus presents no difficulty. The great mystery of the Incarnation as explained

by Sacred Scripture, and the teachings of our holy church, removes all doubt as to the identity of Calvary's Victim, the reality of His Death and the motives which prompted it. We believe that it was in accordance with a plan decided upon in the councils of eternity, that the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity, to save us from the consequences of Adam's fall, took our human nature and entered upon our human life. Although He is God, He became man, and not ordinary man, but Representative Man, Head of the human race,—not chosen by creatures but chosen by God. As Representative Man He accepted the sins of the human race, made them His own and assumed all penalty attached to them. One tear, one prayer, one sigh of God Incarnate would have sufficed to satisfy Divine Justice and restore sinful man to His Creator's love, had not the Almighty decreed that man's Redeemer should die. Everywhere in Sacred Scripture are sin and death related. "By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12) are the words of St. Paul. "The soul that sinneth the same shall die" declares Prophet Ezechiel (Ezech. xviii. 4). "For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death" (Gen. ii. 17) was the Almighty's warning addressed to our first parents, when He placed them in the garden of Paradise, and forbade them to eat of the forbidden fruit. Throughout the old dispensation God constantly reminded His people of His plan for saving them through the death of a Redeemer, Whom He would send in the fullness of time, by requiring sacrificial offerings of bulls and of goats, not that these could ever take away sin, but that they might be recognized as types of the Sacrifice of the One Victim by Whose Blood sins would be blotted out. Everywhere in the pages of the old testament we read of priests and sacrifices, from Abel's smoking altar, where hasty jealousy lifted its

fratricidal hand, onward "to the sprinkling of Blood which speaketh better than that of Abel" (Heb. xii. 24). Isaac's deliverance from the sacrificial blade by the ram divinely substituted for him; the redemption yearly commemorated by the Paschal lamb,—a lamb without blemish, killed and eaten by each family and killed so that in the act not a bone should be broken; the sacrifice of bread and wine offered by Melchisedech (Gen. xiv. 18) and more than all, the great day of Atonement when the High Priest entered the holy of holies and offered sacrifice in the name of the whole nation, these all, incipient and incomplete in themselves, looked forward to, and came at last to their full atoning significance, in the awful Tragedy of Calvary.

The Sacred Scriptures, my brethren, also make it clear that the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity in obedience to His Heavenly Father's will, freely accepted the office of Redeemer of Mankind, with all its duties and its awful penalty, that sin might be blotted out and the sinner saved. Jesus knew how much it would cost Him to restore sinful man to His Father's love. He knew that He must die—die in agony—die in disgrace—die like a felonious slave. The scourge—the spear—the cross—the shame and the spitting—the cutting taunt—the brutal gibe—the defiant challenge—the loud execrations of His enemies—the silent suffering of His loving mother at the foot of His cross—the burning thirst and the cold sweat—the exhaustion and the agony—the harassment of hellish suggestions, and the soul-oppressive weight of the sadness produced by the overclouded countenance of His Father, were all foreseen and accepted by Him. One has only to read through the gospels to learn how the awful Cross was ever before the Savior's eyes. At the marriage-feast of Cana where all was gladness and merriment, Jesus made solemn reference to His "hour" that was yet to come (John ii. 4). When Nicodemus interviewed Him

at night, Christ referred to the "lifting up of the Son of Man" (John iii. 14). When James and John came to request from Him two places of honor in His coming kingdom, He made mention of the "chalice" which He had to drink and of the "baptism" wherewith He must be baptized (Mark x. 38). When Peter confessed that he believed his Master to be the Christ the Son of the Living God, Jesus turned to His disciples and told them that the time was at hand when "He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the ancients and the scribes and the chief priests and be put to death" (Matt. xvi. 21). When Moses and Elias stood with Him on the occasion of His Transfiguration, they talked with Him "of His decease that He should accomplish in Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 31). It is evident then, from Sacred Scripture that Our Lord knew of the cruel and ignominious death which awaited Him. It is equally clear, that He willingly accepted it; gladly and freely gave up His life for our redemption. Jesus throughout His public career sought to impress this truth upon His hearers: "Therefore doth the Father love Me: because I lay down My life, that I may take it up again. No man taketh it away from Me; but I lay it down of myself" (John x. 17). Even when He seemed to be hurrying forward to an inevitable doom, when anyone observing how the clouds were darkening around His path might have presaged the end, Jesus always cheered His followers by telling them that He held in His Hand the power of arresting the course of events. "Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father, and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. xxvi. 53.) And so, regardless of impending doom and in obedience to a Divine command, but with the full consent of His will, our Representative, the High Priest of our human nature, went step by step down that long fearful descent to experiences, the darkness of which we can only faintly imagine—to rejection

by those Whom He had come to save,—to the shame and pain of Crucifixion,—to the hiding of God's face—and to an awful death on the cross. When the moment came for Him to give up His Soul to His Father, it was with extreme joy and thankfulness and confidence that He made the offering. Having lived perfectly His predestined life, day by day giving Himself up to the will of His Father, freely agreeing to all the demands which He had made as conditions for man's redemption, Jesus crowns this perfect life, by dying the perfect death. Remember, my brethren, that death did not come to Our Savior as a natural consequence of the injuries which had been inflicted upon Him. It was not under the pressure of failing nature that He finally succumbed. He died not from necessity, but from free choice. When the time had arrived for the final offering of Himself, Jesus called death to Him, and called it in a firm, clear voice. Although after His last words had been spoken, He had become completely exhausted in consequence of the awful sufferings He had undergone, yet St. Matthew tells us (Matt. xxvii. 50) it was with a loud voice His final announcement was made. He would, in unmistakable tones, proclaim to those within hearing and to all generations until the end of time, that although He dies for men, He dies as God,—not as men die. He bows His Head (John xix. 30) to show that it is willingly and with joy He accepts death from the Hand of His Father; and that, He dies too of His own free will: "Father, into Thy hands, I commend My Spirit." As these words were uttered, Jesus gave up the Ghost; the Seed of the Woman, the Son of God, the Redeemer of man, hung dead upon His Cross. God the Father, accepted the offering made by Him Whom from all eternity He had loved with an infinite love and Whose every act was pleasing in His sight. He threw open wide to Adam and his children the gates of heaven long closed against them, because Jesus, His

Son, had paid the penalty for the first transgression. Man was no longer detestable in his Creator's sight, but cleansed in the Savior's Precious Blood had become once more the object of God's love, heir to God's eternal dwelling-place and to a participation in God's everlasting glory.

From the contemplation of Our Savior hanging dead on Calvary's Cross, let us in concluding turn to fix for a moment our attention upon ourselves. The law of death which claimed Jesus as its own will sooner or later claim each of you. In the midst of all the mysteries, entanglements and broken shadows of life, one thing is certain, that a day will come when you, my friend, will lay yourself down to rise no more; when another will make inquiry for you at your place of business and be told in a low voice that death had called you away; when a friend will pay a visit to your home and leave with moistened eyes and a heavy heart. This you all know to be true. You are as certain as you are of your own existence that there is no escape, no reprieve from death's stern decree. You see him constantly at work around you. Already has he claimed many known to you; some of them dear to you. Your fathers and your mothers have long since, perhaps, obeyed his summons; so have many others with whom you were raised or associated. You have no doubt that you yourself and I, as well as all others now gathered within this sacred edifice, will before very long be numbered with the dead. Many of those who one year ago were seen within these walls, devoutly contemplating Jesus dying on the cross are now no more. Many who are here to-day out of reverence for their Crucified Savior will not live to see another Good Friday. How important that you now regulate your lives so that each day will be a preparation for that event which will mean so much to you. You are now concluding the Holy Lenten Season. Do so as your church desires you should, by resolving that from now on, you will so

live that at whatever hour or under whatever form death may present himself ; whether in old age, maturity or early youth ; whether in your homes with dear ones near, or in the world amidst press of business ; whether in the flush of health or after years of suffering, you will be equally prepared for his coming. God grant, my brethren, that when this all-important moment arrives, you and I and all those who are dear to us may close our eyes in perfect hope, trust and love, as we say with Jesus dying on the cross : "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

THE THREE HOURS' AGONY

LESSONS FROM CHRIST'S PASSION

(Concluding Sermon)

THERE is nothing in human history comparable with the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. If it be true that the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity came down to earth and suffered and died for creatures, then there is no subject which should attract and enchain our attention like the scene witnessed nineteen hundred years ago on Mount Calvary. We have been for nigh three hours face to face with that awful Tragedy. It remains for us to now treasure up for service in the years to come some of the truths which must have impressed themselves upon us during our meditations this afternoon on the closing hours of Our Savior's life, otherwise in vain have been our participation in the devotions we are now concluding.

It was sin, my brethren, that made Calvary's Tragedy necessary. We know this from God's revealed word. We could not have known it otherwise. By no process of reasoning could it have been made clear to us that disobedience of God's command had caused in the creature's soul such measureless guilt that nothing less than a sacrifice infinite in merit could make adequate satisfaction for it. Our human minds can understand how sin could keep heaven closed during four thousand years to creatures who had rebelled against their Maker's law; how it could bring upon earth all the woes, miseries, sicknesses and calamities that men have suffered since the fall and will continue to suffer until the coming of Judgment Day; how in the life to come it will

bring eternal punishment upon the unrepentant, but it is beyond the capabilities of our intellects to realize that sin is so awful in God's eyes that He had to send His Only-Begotten Son into the world to die because of it. In no other way could Adam's sin be atoned for. Our first parents could do nothing to extricate themselves and their posterity from the terrible predicament into which transgression of God's command had placed them. They might offer up their good works, their prayers, their fasts, their almsdeeds in satisfaction, but to no purpose, because guilt had rendered them incapable of any meritorious deed in the sight of heaven. Amongst their descendants, even though free of all actual sin, none could be found capable of making atonement for Adam's crime, because its malice was infinite. It would be within the capabilities of a creature to satisfy for an offense against a fellow-mortal; to make atonement for injury done an inferior or an equal, but by no effort of which he is capable could he reconcile sinful mankind with their Sinless God. Heaven seems purposely to have suffered four thousand years to elapse from the fall to the redemption to allow men time to judge for themselves how very inadequate their degraded virtues were in making the atonement which the Almighty One exacted because of Adam's sin.

Could not fallen man have appeased the anger of his offended Creator by sacrifice, a practical recognition of the supreme dominion of God and of the dependence of the creature on Him? No, my brethren, not by sacrifice either could man have atoned for Adam's sin. He might take the choicest produce of his fields and lay it upon the altar, it would avail him nothing. He might take what is more precious still,—the first-born of his flocks—he might offer whole hecatombs to his offended God but to no purpose. There must be a human sacrifice, for the human race was guilty before God. Man might offer up his child, his brother, slaying him with-

out pity,—it would be useless, for the victim is not clean, but tainted with sin. The lamb, the sheep without spot is pure but it would not do; it cannot substitute for fallen man, because it is not human.

If man, partaking of the primeval guilt was powerless to make satisfaction to the outraged Deity, could he not have found a substitute in one of the intermediate beings between him and his Creator? Could not one of those blessed spirits that encircle the Almighty's throne have intervened in man's behalf? Milton in *Paradise Lost* represents the Almighty announcing Adam's fall to the astonished heavens and asking if anyone of the celestial powers was willing to devote himself for the redemption of mankind. All the divine hierarchy was mute. Among the many seraphim, thrones, dominations, angels, and archangels not one was found who was willing to make the sacrifice which God's justice demanded for man's redemption.

"Say, heavenly powers, where shall we find such love
Which of you will be mortal to redeem
Man's mortal crime? and just, th' unjust to save?
Dwells in all heaven charity so dear?

He ask'd, but all the heavenly choir stood mute,
And silence was in heaven: on man's behalf
Patron or intercessor none appear'd;
Much less that durst upon his own head draw
The deadly forfeiture, and ransom set."

Even, my brethren, had there been found one amongst those pure spirits who minister about God's throne to substitute for fallen man, he would be powerless to afford relief for the reason that it was human, not angelic nature, which had forsaken God, and it must itself return to Him; must itself offer the sacrifice of reparation.

Again, my brethren, the Almighty had decreed that the victim who was to satisfy for man's sin must do so by suf-

fering and shedding of blood. St. Paul declares that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." The Blood to be shed for sinners must be the Blood of an Immaculate Victim, such as cannot be found amongst the sons of men, and yet this Victim must possess our human nature in order to be our proper Representative. Finally, my brethren, this Victim must also be Divine, since naught less than Divinity can by voluntary suffering merit Divine Mercy for the guilty and reconcile with Eternal Justice the fallen and rebellious. It is true, the offended Creator could have annihilated the fallen race in which sin had taken root, and thus have put an end to the evil. Or, He could have freely pardoned the sinner and dispensed him from making satisfaction. He did not choose to do either. Viewing all things not from a point on earth but from the unclouded heights of His own All-Wise Providence, He decided to provide a means of salvation for man by which he might attain a much higher stage of glory than he could ever have hoped to attain had Adam never fallen. With this end in view, from all ages a Divine plan had been prepared. One able to pay the Infinite price which God's Justice demanded in atonement for man's sin, would come to earth. He would descend from heaven and take upon Himself human nature,—a nature capable of suffering, a nature that could be abused and crushed and victimized,—that He might be the World's Savior. He would so assume human nature that everything He should do as a Victim in it would be attributed to God. This Being, this Victim was Jesus Christ, Co-equal and Consubstantial with the Father; All-Mighty like Him, All-Holy like Him, adored by celestial spirits like Him, reigning on His throne forever like Him; possessing in short like Him, all the perfections of the Godhead. For this Son the Father had from all eternity an infinite love, yet this Most Holy, Most Perfect, Most Beloved Being is the One who was chosen to endure all that is most

humiliating in earthly degradation, all that is most excruciating in human suffering, and death itself in atonement for man's sin. It was possible for God to have ordained that, once the mystery of the Incarnation had taken place, the very first act of homage offered to the Father by the Incarnate Word, should be accepted as full expiation of the sins of men. By reason of the Divinity of the Person of Christ each act of worship offered by Him had in itself an infinite merit, and was more than sufficient to expiate all the evil of sin. Hence the actual death of Christ was in no sense the mere execution of a law of justice, or the only possible means of redemption, or demanded by any necessity other than that which was created by the bounteous desire of Divine Love which ordained that thus and in no other manner should man be redeemed. Adam and Eve in the garden of Paradise were told of the consequence of their violation of God's command: "For in what day soever thou shalt eat it (the forbidden fruit) thou shalt die the death." Nothing less, by God's decree, than the death of the sinner would be acceptable to the offended Creator. In accordance with this decree Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, laid aside His glory, assumed our human nature, submitted to be betrayed, scourged, condemned, crucified and to die on a cross as our Representative that we be delivered from that eternal death which is the true wages of sin. How awful, my brethren, in God's eyes must sin be, when it required such a sacrifice! No such proof of the dreadful and malignant nature of moral evil can be given. Abstract reasonings from the infinite excellence and holiness of God, and practical comments on the overthrown of the angels, the drowning of the antediluvians, the burning of Sodom, the extermination of the Canaanites, must all yield to the scene on Calvary. Even the most profound study of the Divine Law, to which sin is opposed, can convey to us no such impression of its heinousness. The

Cross is the mirror which reflects the true features and lineaments of moral evil. Men in their ignorance and partiality may conceive of it as a small matter; may palliate their offences and plead excuses for them as if they were too trivial to be noticed or severely punished, but let them seriously weigh the momentous truth that Christ, God's Beloved Son, had to die in agony before a single transgression could be forgiven and sin must appear to them to be all that God has declared it to be when through the mouth of the prophet He pronounced it that "abominable thing which I hate" (Jer. xlv. 4). If, my brethren, you have wondered that the Offended Almighty was so exacting in His demands on Him Who had taken the sinner's place, you have an explanation in this, that it was becoming that man should be redeemed in a way which would bring home to creatures a sense of the righteousness of God and of the heinousness of sin.

The Tragedy of Calvary is not only an unanswerable argument on the Justice of God and the heinousness of sin, but it is likewise a most convincing proof of God's love for creatures. This love had prompted Him to call them into being; to make them after His own image and likeness; to breathe into them immortal souls, capable of knowing, loving and serving Him on earth and meriting for themselves eternal happiness in the life to come. When they had foolishly and basely forfeited the friendship of their Maker by sin and brought an eternity of woe upon themselves as well as upon their posterity, the Divine Son was sent to earth to re-instate them in His Father's love. Jesus accepted the work His Father gave Him to do. He quitted His throne in heaven; took upon Himself human nature that He might dwell amongst His creatures and serve and save them. Although throughout a life of thirty-three years by works of mercy, by healing lepers, by restoring sight to the blind, by raising the dead to life, by pardoning sinners who had gone to Him

seeking mercy, He had given indisputable proofs of His love for creatures, they were unconvinced. It was necessary that He lay down His life that the sincerity of His love for weak, sinful mortals might be unquestioned. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). Jesus hung on Calvary's cross because He willed to be there as your Representative. You know what is meant by a representative,—one who represents a country, a class, a line of thought, a political or social aspiration. In this same sense Jesus represented human nature. He represented it, just as Adam represented it. According to St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 45) Jesus is the Second Adam, standing out from among all other members of the human family, as occupying a position corresponding to that of the first Adam. In the first Adam the whole human family lived in inclusion, and his acts compromised all his descendants by the same law which in our day makes the good or bad character of a father or a father's bodily constitution, rendered healthy by sober living, or infeeblled by vice, as the case may be, the inheritance of his child. Between us and the first Adam the connection is natural and necessary; between us and the Second Adam the relationship depends upon our being brought into real contact with Him by faith and love through the grace which comes to us in the sacrament of regeneration. By this new birth we are privileged to claim from Jesus His representative relationship and what it involves,—the making of His acts, our acts, His sufferings our sufferings, His sacrifices our sacrifices, His merits our merits. Long ages before the Savior's coming had the Prophet (Isaias liii. 4) said of Him: "Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought Him, as it were, a leper and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins. The chastisement of our peace was

upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed. And we like sheep have gone astray, everyone hath turned aside into his own way and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." If the Tragedy of Calvary, the Agony of Jesus on the cross is not sufficient, it is not in the power of Omnipotence to convince you of your Savior's Love.

I fear, my brethren, that much of the benefit which should come to you from consideration of Christ's Sacrifice is lost because you are not sufficiently impressed with the part you yourselves played in that awful Tragedy. You are inclined to look upon the Crucifixion as an event of long ago, perpetrated by others, forgetting that even though nineteen centuries lie between our day and the hour when that Jewish mob hurried Jesus to Calvary and looked on with callous eyes as they saw Him die in agony, you yourselves took an active part in everything that then happened to your Savior. You were on Calvary in your sins. You cried aloud for the Blood of Jesus. You helped nail Him to the cross. You stood beneath His gibbet and ridiculed Him; challenged Him to come down. This was the significance of your sins foreseen by your dying Savior. The vision of sin which oppressed the Heart of Jesus in Gethsemane and broke it upon the cross was not a mere dark, impenetrable cloud of collective human wickedness, but a host of individual acts of sin, a multitude of different forms of outrage against the eternal love of God, countless according to the reckoning of men, yet very distinct in the clear vision of Him Who looked out upon the world from the cross. "He knew what was in man" and His knowledge was definite and personal. Once He wrote upon the ground and showed the accusers of a sinful woman that their own sins were not hidden from Him. At the Last Supper He told Judas of his secret thought and his future crime. To Peter, full of confidence in the strength of his own devotion, He foretold his coming fall: "Even in

this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice" (Mark xiv. 30). With similar clearness He saw and could have foretold the numerous transgressions, the many relapses which made up the spiritual history of each one of you. Not even the least of your sins, my friend, was hidden from Him during His Agony. For you, then, as for the Jews who crucified Jesus there is a special, personal relation to the cross. By your own free and deliberate action you added to its sorrows; you contributed a portion of bitterness to the cup which Jesus drained to the dregs.

Not only my friend, were you, by your evil deeds a participator in the awful tragedy which took place on Calvary nineteen hundred years ago, but according to the teaching of St. Paul (Heb. vi. 6) your sins of to-day crucify anew your Savior and make Him a mockery. Jesus sees you now as from the cross He saw everyone who took part in His Crucifixion. His eyes are now fixed on you, sinner; on you alone. You may be the humblest, simplest, poorest of His creatures, yet He, the Infinite God, Whose greatness is unsearchable, Whose ways are past finding out sees you, cares for you, knows your sorrows, your weaknesses, your sins, and longs for your love. This is inconceivable and incredible one may think. I can understand, he may say, how the Almighty can make laws for the universe, set the stars in their courses, call up with a thought a myriad of living things and annihilate them with a breath, but find it hard to believe that the Great God loves me, cares for me with my obscure life, my petty affairs, my many imperfections and grievous sins. Yet, my friend, it is nevertheless true, that no matter how obscure or disregarded by men, or sinful you may be, you are individually known and individually loved by that Savior who died on Calvary's cross. He is to-day the same Jesus who went about doing good. The Sacred Scriptures tell us how on a certain occasion He let virtue pass out of Him that He

might restore health to a poor, infirm, unnoticed beggar; how He healed the demoniac in his agony; flooded the soul of a woman of wasted life with peace and strength; moved about amongst the peasants of Galilee and the fishermen of its lake consoling them in their sorrows; assured His troubled disciples that He was preparing a place for them where they would be happy with Him forever. That same Jesus speaks to each one of you to-day from the cross. His dying lips assure you of His love for you. They tell you, too, of the awfulness of sin. They call upon you to give for the future a truer service, a more ardent love to Him Who has so many claims upon you. This special appeal is made to each of you this afternoon. Give, my brethren, the Loving Heart of your dying Savior the only comfort He asks of you, the only comfort in your power to give. Tear yourself away from the rabble crying aloud for His Blood. Leave that crowd of sinners who are still rejecting Jesus, still preferring the unlawful pleasures of earth to Him and His law, crying out with the Jews: "Give us Barabbas! Give us Barabbas and away with Jesus of Nazareth, let Him be crucified." As you value your eternal salvation, no longer harden your hearts to the appeal which He addresses you today, answering in deed, if not in word: "Go show your crown of thorns, your bleeding wounds, your disfigured Person to others; they will not move us a single step from the beaten path of our daily lives." Such language is nothing less than a challenge hurled at Jesus Christ. It is tantamount to the blasphemous cry that went forth from the Jews defying His might: "His Blood be upon us and upon our children."

If, my brethren, in conclusion, the exhortations to which you have listened have aroused your consciences, convicting them of sin, assuring them that they are not right with God; if the scenes on which you have been dwelling during these meditations,—the scenes of woe and of victory, the words,

the wounds, the darkened sky, the awful silence,—speak to your souls as if from another and a distant world, if at the foot of your Savior's cross you have lost thought of the material and the transient present, in the keener sight of that world which is beyond sense and which does not pass away, pray that these higher glimpses, emotions, convictions, may not die like the vast array of unfruitful feelings which make up so large a part of human life. If the rest of the year you be an unprofitable servant, it will avail you nothing to have thought much, felt much, prayed much, hoped for much on Good Friday.

MIXED MARRIAGES

(First Sermon)

THE MIXED MARRIAGE CONDEMNED

IT is indisputable, my brethren, that agencies inimical to the interests of Christ's Church seriously interfere with and counteract, her efforts to carry on in this country the work for which she was organized and commissioned nineteen hundred years ago. Whilst she has, because of the freedom given her in this land, accomplished much for Christ, it cannot be denied that she has suffered defeat after defeat, from powers arrayed against her. Were this not so, the Catholic population of these United States would be twice what it now is. These are facts which defy contradiction. They impose on us, to whom Christ and His interests are dear, the most sacred duty of doing our utmost to counteract the efforts of those agents, which in our midst have played, and are now playing, havoc on the souls of our brethren. Whilst there are many forces combined against us of which we know nothing,—working as they do in the dark or behind barred doors and in secret chambers,—there are others whose hostility is above board and unquestioned. We can name societies which make no attempt to conceal either their antipathy to the Catholic Church or their determination to crush her. With these organizations we are not very much concerned. Our Church has been opposed by such enemies since her organization. She has never feared them. She does not fear them now. Her Divine Founder in commissioning her to take up and carry on His work, warned her that the powers of earth and of hell would at all times and everywhere be leagued against her, but that their efforts

would be unavailing because He would be always with her. There are, however, forces at work against the Church which she does fear. These are not professedly inimical to her and because of this fact, their baneful influence is not, in many cases, recognized or guarded against, until the harm done by them has become irremediable. In the first rank of these powers to which I refer stands the Mixed Marriage. There is no exaggeration in saying that it does satan's work amongst our Catholic people more thoroughly and more extensively than do all other forces combined. This being true, I need offer no apology for beginning this evening a series of sermons on Mixed Marriages.

No matter which engages your attention on earth, my brethren, is so important as that of choosing a companion for life. It is different from selecting a partner in business, where at any moment, the partnership may be dissolved should it not prove profitable or congenial. It is different likewise from taking one into the family as a servant, for he may be discharged at the employer's pleasure should the service rendered by him be unsatisfactory. It is also unlike entering a religious community, where there is a long period of probation, during which one will learn whether he be suited for the order or the order for him, and where he will have the aid of prayer and the assistance of a judicious spiritual director in determining God's will in his regard. The contract entered into by man and woman in holy wedlock is indissoluble. It matters not that both parties afterwards agree they made a mistake in marrying; that whilst their wedded life continues nothing but misery can be hoped for, there is no relief for them but in death. Again, my brethren, the Creator's object in destining many of His creatures for married life was not solely that each may have a protector or a support, nor for the purpose of perpetuating the human family. These are not the sole, nor the primary

ends intended by our Heavenly Father in instituting the married state. You are all well aware that this life is but a preparation for another ; that your stay here is limited to a few years, at most, when eternity will be entered upon. You are convinced, too, that whether you are to be happy or miserable after death, depends entirely on the life you are now living. It is therefore the existence which begins when our days of probation on earth have ended, which supplies the end and the scope of our creation. No other affair than our interests in the world beyond the tomb, should be allowed to dictate and regulate our conduct now. Our Heavenly Father has placed us on earth for no other purpose than that of meriting everlasting happiness with Him and His blessed saints in the world to come. Our lives, at the moment of death, must be regarded as having been miserable failures should they not have merited for us the end for which the Creator called us into being. The attainment of this end is within the reach of all. To every creature, in each and every state of life, graces necessary for attaining eternal salvation are apportioned. This is true of the married state, as of others. The Creator made us male and female, in order that in holy wedlock, husband and wife may be a mutual help, support and comfort to each other ; that they be mutually interested, not only in those affairs with which their temporal happiness is concerned, but likewise and principally in all that shapes their eternal destiny. If such be the duties of husband and wife to each other, then, apart from any other consideration, it is evident firstly, that temporal considerations should not be allowed to direct one in the choice of his or her partner for life, and secondly that the religion of one's husband or of one's wife is the most important of all the things of which one thinking of marrying is to take cognizance. This is the reason, my brethren, that the Church of God throughout her long history, has ever

insisted that an essential condition for a holy and a happy union is that husband and wife worship at the same altar.

To a Catholic contemplating matrimony, the fact that his Church is now and ever has been unalterably opposed to Mixed Marriages, should be sufficient to convince him that such unions must be unmistakably wrong. He recognizes in his Church, a divine institution sent into this world by the Savior to continue His work of saving souls. The Sacred Scriptures assure us that at the time Jesus commissioned this Church to represent Him on earth until the end of time, He demanded that all creatures listen to her voice and obey her commands, and guaranteed that she shall never lead them astray, since He Himself shall remain with her forever, and the Holy Ghost shall always abide within her, teaching her truth and preserving her from falling into error. This divinely authorized teacher of the ages, has at all times, in unmistakable language, forbidden Mixed Marriages. In doing so, she is not publishing a law of her own making, but simply putting in force and continuing a Divine law, immutably fixed and awfully sanctioned by the Creator Himself. We know from the sacred pages that at the very beginning of our race, the Almighty forbade His children to enter marriage with those of a different creed, because such unions are detrimental to His honor and glory and inimical to the eternal welfare of creatures. We read in the Book of Genesis that when God's chosen sons took to themselves wives from amongst the daughters of unbelieving nations about them, the earth became so corrupt as a result of these unholy alliances, that the Creator declared He repented having made man (Gen. vi. 6) and sent the deluge to purge the world. Some generations after the flood, when many of the Jews, because of their association with unbelievers, had turned away from God, He reminded the Patriarchs of His will, that they should not only avoid intermingling with

heathens, but should seek wives for themselves and for their sons amongst their own people. In obedience to this command, Abraham made his servant swear by the God of heaven and earth that he would not take a wife for Isaac "of the daughters of the Chanaanites" (Gen. xxiv. 3) but from Abraham's own country and kindred. Isaac in turn, laid the same obligation on his son Jacob, saying: "Take not a wife of the stock of Chaanan" (Gen. xxviii. 1). We find later on in the history of the Israelites, the Almighty, once more publishing, through Moses, the most solemn and uncompromising prohibition against his people intermarrying with unbelievers. Listen to these words of the Jewish leader: "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them. Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son. For she will turn away thy son from following Me, that he may rather serve strange gods, and the wrath of the Lord will be kindled and will quickly destroy thee" (Deut. vii. 3). Note, my brethren, how stern and uncompromising is the Divine command: "Thou shalt not make marriages with them (unbelievers). Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son." Note also, that God does not give as a reason for His prohibition of Mixed Marriages, the *danger* of the unbelieving wife perverting her believing husband, but the fact that she *will* do it. He declares most positively and unqualifiedly: "She will turn away thy son from following Me."

The history of the Israelites shows that the Divine law against Mixed Marriages was a most benign and merciful dispensation; that whenever the Jews heeded God's warning against contracting marriage with neighboring unbelievers they enjoyed the blessing of heaven. It shows on the other hand, that the violation of the divine law, forbidding these unholy alliances, was invariably accompanied by evils of the gravest consequence; that these forbidden unions were the

chief causes of the infidelities, impurities and sacrileges which often forfeited for the chosen people, Jehovah's protection and brought heathen worship not only into the palaces of their kings, but even to the very gates of their temple. We are told in the sacred pages that: "The children of Israel dwelt in the midst of the Chanaanites . . . and they took their daughters to wives and gave their own daughters to their sons and they served their gods. And they did evil in the sight of the Lord and they forgot their God" (Judges iii. 5). We are told also, in scripture of the awful misfortunes which befell King Solomon—famous for his faith and wisdom—because he disobeyed the Divine Law against Mixed Marriages: Listen to these words of inspiration: "Solomon loved many strange women . . . of the nations, concerning which the Lord said to the children of Israel: 'you shall not go into them, neither shall any of them come into yours, for they will most certainly turn away your heart to follow their gods.' . . . And when he was now old, his heart was turned away by women to follow strange gods; and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God. . . . And the Lord was angry with Solomon; because his mind was turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel" (3 Kings xi. 1). It was an awful spectacle—the consequence of disregarding the Almighty's warning against Mixed Marriages—to see this, wisest of men, in his old age, bowing down his gray hairs in the worship of idols which his soul despised. It is laid to the charge of King Achab, as the height of his crimes, that he married a woman of a false religion, by whom he was still more perverted. The scriptural account says of him: "Achab . . . did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. Nor was it enough for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nabat, but he also took to wife Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Sidonians, and he went and served Baal and adored him" (3 Kings xvi. 30).

It was such awful consequences of Mixed Marriages as these, foreseen by Almighty God, which made His attitude towards these unions, so uncompromising in the Old Law: "Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son" (Deut. vii. 3). Let me conclude this part of my instruction with the remark that after recalling these striking examples of the consequences which followed in the Old Dispensation from the violation of the Almighty's Law against Mixed Marriages, she is a foolish young woman who exposes herself to the dangers against which God, in His solicitude for her eternal welfare warns her. Misfortunes, similar to those which followed the marriages of Solomon, Achab and of others mentioned in the sacred pages, follow the Mixed Marriages of to-day. What God said would happen, as a result of these forbidden unions, is taking place continually before our eyes. You, young woman, know this to be true, though you see only a small portion of the sins, miseries and misfortunes which follow the Mixed Marriage. You see sufficient, however, to be convinced that the Mixed Marriage is the greatest evil against which God's Church has to contend. Yet despite this conviction you are not prepared to frankly admit that the misfortunes which have befallen others who took a chance in a Mixed Marriage, not only may but probably shall happen in your own case should you too, disregard God's warnings. You may not, it is true, become as Solomon did, a worshipper of idols as the result of marrying one who is not a Christian. You may not lose your Catholic faith and become a member of another church as many others have done. Such things, we know, have often happened and shall continue to happen until the end of time. There is no certainty that they shall happen in your particular case. This, however, is certain that marriage with one who is not a member of your church will make you less a Catholic than you now are.

God is unchangeable, my brethren. His opposition to Mixed Marriages, so uncompromising in the Old Dispensation, has not ceased in the new law. The curse which He put upon these unions in the beginning, has not, in our day been changed into a blessing. The dire consequences which He declared would result from them then, have not ceased to follow them now. Hence the Almighty's condemnation of Mixed Marriages still continues. The Church founded by Jesus Christ and authorized to speak with His Voice and to command with His Authority, forbids her members to enter the state of wedlock with those who are unbelievers. The Sixth Precept of this Church, as you know, is: "Not to marry persons who are not Catholics, or who are related to us within the fourth degree of kindred, nor privately without witnesses, nor to solemnize marriage at forbidden times." You recognize in this Church a Divine Institution representing God on earth. You believe that it was to her alone your Savior spoke when He said: "He that heareth you heareth Me and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him Who sent Me." We know what has been from the beginning the teaching of this Church on Mixed Marriages. All the injunctions laid upon the first Christians, recorded in the New Testament, about avoiding dangerous communications with those of false religion, imply the obligation of not entering into marriage with them. St. Paul in numerous passages found in his epistles warns his converts against the pernicious consequences of too intimate an association with those who are "enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction" (Phil. iii. 18). "A man that is a heretic . . . avoid" (Titus iii. 10). "Bear not the yoke together with unbelievers. For what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever?" (2 Cor.

vi. 14.) All through the centuries which have intervened since St. Paul wrote these warning words, the Church to which was committed the duty of teaching Christ's saving truths, has never ceased to do all in her power to prevent her children entering wedlock with those outside her pale. She had been but a short time engaged in her Master's work when she realized that these unholy unions are inimical to her best interests and legislated against them. Early in her history the Synod of Elvira held in 305 condemned the Mixed Marriage in these words: "If heretics will not enter the Catholic Church, the daughters of Catholics must not be given them in marriage. They are not to be given to Jews or to heretics, because there can be no society between believers and unbelievers. If parents act against this decree let them abstain from Communion for five years." The Synod of Arles held in 314; of Laodicea held in 365; of Chalcedon held in 451, and the Council of Agatho held in 506 made the same stringent laws against Mixed Marriages as did the Synod of Elvira. Since those early times almost every Diocesan Synod, Provincial and General Council held in the Church has condemned these unions in terms which cannot be misunderstood.

I could quote for you, my brethren, from the decrees of the many councils held by the Church during the last nineteen hundred years to show you that the attitude of our holy mother towards the Mixed Marriage has been always and everywhere the same. I feel, however, that this is altogether unnecessary. I will content myself with recalling some of the warning words which have been addressed, at various times, to the Catholics of America, by their Bishops, assembled in Council. The Fathers of the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, held in 1866, earnestly exhorted the pastors of souls to warn the flocks committed to their keeping, at least once a year, and in forcible language, of the evils

which spring from Mixed Marriages and to show them that the Church has the weightiest reasons to discountenance such nuptials. The decrees of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore held in 1884, instruct priests as to what they should do to prevent Mixed Marriages and diminish the evils resulting from them. In their Pastoral Letter addressed to the Catholics of this country, the Fathers of this Third Plenary Council of Baltimore use these words: "The basis of the Christian Home is Christian marriage, that is, marriage entered into according to religion and cemented by God's blessing. So great is the importance of marriage to the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind, that as it had God for its Founder in the Old Law, so in the New Law it was raised by our Divine Lord to the dignity of a Sacrament of the Christian Religion. Natural likings and instincts have their own value and weight, but they ought not by themselves to be a decisive motive in so important a step as Christian marriage; nor are they a safe guarantee for the proper fulfillment of the high ends for which marriage was ordained. That Christian hearts and lives may be wisely and rightly joined, God must join them and religion sanctify the union; and though the Church sometimes permits the contraction of Mixed Marriages, she never does so without regret and without a feeling of anxiety for the future happiness of that union and for the eternal salvation of its offspring. . . . The Church has always been averse to marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics on account of the ignominious participation in things divine, or on account of the greatest possible danger of the perversion of the Catholic party."

In 1868 the Bishops of our own Province prepared a Pastoral on Christian Marriage which they ordered read, in all the churches of the province. Let me quote a few sentences from this letter. "We condemn as fraught with most

disastrous consequences, the rashness of those who recklessly make matrimonial engagements without carefully examining whether in the persons of their choice are found the qualities required in good husbands or wives. Now, among the qualities which a Catholic should seek in a companion, before matrimonial engagement, and in fact, before beginning or contemplating any mutual affection, is the incomparable treasure of Catholic Faith. Hence the Church abhors and has ever abhorred Mixed Marriages."

Before concluding this instruction let me recall to your minds, my brethren, a few sentences from the Pastoral Letter lately addressed you by the Archbishop and Bishops of this province. "The Pastors, too must in our day and in our generation, watch over the social life of their young men and their young women, so that, when the time comes for marriage, it will be easy for the Catholic man to find one of his own faith with whom love and union will be in accord with the mind and the law of the Church, for the Church prefers always that Catholics marry Catholics, that they plight their troth in the presence of Christ in the Sacrament of His love. Surely the marriage of Catholics with those of their faith is better, is wiser, is more in accord with Christ's ideal, for the perfect union which Christ demands is only possible when those who intend to marry have the same ideal of the sanctity of marriage, have the same standard of right and of wrong, have, in prayer and in the Sacraments the same source of light and of strength and an ever increasing grace to enable them to triumph over the difficulties of life and to make sacrifice which may be sometimes supreme. For this reason, Holy Mother Church has always looked askance upon the union of Catholics and those outside the Church. Truly she does allow such marriages, under certain conditions, but they are always to her the source of greatest anxiety. Her mission is to carry out the will of Christ and to make mar-

riage a means of building up a spiritual people; to make marriage a step to a higher spiritual perfection for those who enter this holy state. She finds it hard to conceive that the non-Catholic party will recognize the dignity, the holiness of the sacramental rite; she knows from sad experience that the environment created by such marriages weakens, yea often destroys faith; but above all things, she finds it hard to commit the training of Catholic children to one who knows not the Catholic religion and who will be ill-equipped to give to the child anything like a clear insight into the Church, her history, her place in the great scheme of God's providence in the world." These words, my brethren, need no comment.

I have aimed in this discourse, to convince you, my brethren, that God's Church has at all times, taken an unflinching stand against Mixed Marriages as is evidenced by the decrees of her Councils, both Ecumenical and Provincial. I might add that the Popes who have ruled the Church since its establishment have been conscious of the devastating inroads made upon their children by these unholy unions. Hardly a Pontiff has sat on the chair of Peter who has not denounced Mixed Marriages, and called upon the bishops and priests of the world to do their utmost against them. In the face of such testimony your duty, my brethren, is evident. You must be a very indifferent child of God's Church, if you are not determined never to be a party to a Mixed Marriage. It matters not how strongly parents may advise you to marry one, not of your faith, they are not to be listened to. In matters of such importance, where the salvation of souls is concerned, God's Church should be your adviser. Parents may be and often are actuated by unworthy motives. Your Church, is directed by the Holy Ghost, and has in view God's glory and the eternal welfare of those committed to her care. Hence you are commanded to obey those who have been placed over you as representatives of

the Church. "Obey your prelates, and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls" (Heb. xiii. 17). Where has there ever been a prelate who recommended Mixed Marriages? Such never lived. Always and everywhere there has been but one verdict,—a most uncompromising one,—on these unions. All in a position to pass judgment upon them, have, without a dissenting voice, pronounced them the most fruitful sources of evil, the most deadly of the weapons used by satan in his onslaughts on souls and the most powerful of all the factors in that warfare which is ever carried on against the Church of Jesus Christ.

MIXED MARRIAGES

(Second Sermon)

DISPENSATIONS

IN my last instruction, my brethren, I showed you that Mixed Marriages have been condemned by Almighty God in the Old Dispensation as well as in the New Law by the Church commissioned by Our Savior to teach all nations unto the end of time. This evening we are to consider the question, often asked: "If the attitude of God in the Old Law and of God's Church in the New Law has always been one of uncompromising opposition to Mixed Marriages, why does the Catholic Church grant dispensations to her children, permitting them to become parties to contracts which, we are told, she loathes and condemns?" This question, I repeat, is often asked, and is a reasonable one. Let us give it our consideration a few minutes.

There are in the Church to-day, as there have been at all other periods of her history, some theologians who claim that she should grant no dispensations for a Mixed Marriage, and that any Catholics who should disobey her law and marry outside her fold should be excommunicated. Whilst the number of Mixed Marriages would undoubtedly decrease were the Church to act as advised by these theologians, there is no assurance that the evils resulting from these unions, which we now complain of, would be lessened or mitigated, but on the contrary there is a certainty that they would become more numerous and far more disastrous than they now are. The Church knows that in some cases, women bent on getting married are beyond control. Let the most

awful consequences be as apparent as they possibly can be, there is no reasoning with them. If they cannot be married with the sanction of their church they will marry without it, despite the train of evils which must necessarily follow. Our Savior in founding His Church was aware of conditions which would prevail in her at every period of her existence. On more than one occasion He distinctly told His hearers that men of wicked lives would at all times be found amongst those professing to be His disciples. He likened His Church to a net cast into the sea and enclosing fish both good and bad. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kinds of fishes, which, when it was filled, they drew out, and sitting by the shore, they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth. So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; 'there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Matt. xiii. 47). Our Savior in relating this Parable had in mind the conduct of Catholic women who throughout the ages would enter into Mixed Marriages despite the opposition of their Church to these unions. He was thinking of them too when He framed the Parable of the Wheat and the Cockle, and laid down the policy which would be pursued by His religion in dealing with these and other disobedient children. In the East, at the time of Our Savior, men sometimes took revenge upon an enemy by strewing his newly sown wheat fields with seeds of a noxious weed, called cockle. This weed in the beginning, whilst young and green, closely resembled wheat. It was only when the field was beginning to ripen for the harvest that the presence of the worthless cockle could be discerned amongst the good grain. The servants of the husbandman referred to by Our Savior, on discovering the weed growing amongst the wheat, said to their master: "Wilt thou

that we go and gather it up?" Their zeal to promote the interests of their lord was, no doubt, laudable, but at the same time the means proposed by them for doing so, were rash, and would have been productive of the most pernicious consequences. Their plan was to set about immediately pulling up the tares by the root. It was no sooner proposed than refected by the householder, with the explanation: "Lest perhaps gathering up the cockle you root up the wheat also together with it." These words were intended by Our Savior, as a check on the impudent zeal of many who in other times would fain purge His field at once of weeds. His blessed saints spending their days and their nights in the prayerful contemplation of the progress of events in the world and in the Church, must burn with indignation at the sight of so much evil about them of which Mixed Marriages are the cause and would gladly call down fire from heaven on offenders, as Elias did, and as the two Apostles, the sons of Zebedee, would have done, on an occasion mentioned in gospel history, were this not contrary to the will of their Savior. Christ's plan is to tolerate patiently for awhile, the presence of these bad Catholics in the Church, lest others should suffer were these unworthy members to be expelled. This is the policy pursued by our holy religion in dealing with Mixed Marriages. Were a young woman, for instance, because she had disregarded the law of her church by marrying one not of her faith, to be excommunicated, many, no doubt, would say that she deserved such treatment; that one, who has no respect for the will of the Church in the important affair of Matrimony, does not really belong in the Church, and should be driven without her pale. This, however, is not the reasoning of our Holy Mother. Out of consideration for others—especially the little children who may be born of the union—she makes use of the power which belongs to her as Christ's representative on earth, and chooses the lesser of

two evils, in permitting one of her members to become a party to a Mixed Marriage.

The stand taken by the Catholic Church in granting permission to one of her members to do what she had forbidden, is not always rightly understood. They who criticize her action, forget that the law from which she dispenses, is her own law. No one questions the accepted principle that the legislator from whom the law derives its binding force, has power to relax it. All laws made by the Church are intended to promote the honor and glory of the Creator and the eternal welfare of His creatures. The Church may find however in certain cases that a law which she had framed for the general good may not be beneficial in this or that particular case and therefore should be relaxed. She cannot interfere in the Divine Law, except to interpret or explain it, when doubt exists as to its meaning. She cannot pronounce an act sinful, against God's law, and then give her subjects permission or a dispensation to commit it. This she has never done; never will do. She cannot allow the smallest deed essentially sinful—the most trifling falsehood for instance—for any consideration whatsoever. When she dispenses in the case of a Mixed Marriage she does nothing more than relax her own law. Her action in this instance is like that of a father who forbids his son to remain out at night after a certain hour, and yet for particular reasons he occasionally allows him more liberty. The Church requires her children to fast on certain days. She can, when a good reason exists, dispense from this law. In legislating on Matrimony for the general good, she forbids her members to enter the holy state of wedlock with unbelievers. Were she to live up strictly to this law, the consequences in some cases would be more disastrous than would be those which would result were the Mixed Marriage permitted. Such is the motive which prompts the Church to allow, in a particular case,

one of her members to enter the married state with one who does not belong to her fold.

The action of the Church, in permitting Mixed Marriages, under certain conditions, is not to be understood as a sanction of these unions. There is nothing in the legislation of the Church which can in any way be interpreted as an approval of Mixed Marriages. On the contrary, in everything the Church has said or done in reference to these unholy alliances, she has emphasized her detestation of them. It is, and always has been a source of pain to her, that one belonging to the fold of Jesus Christ, should be so unmindful of his or of her dignity, so inconsiderate of her wishes, so careless in a matter of such importance as the selection of a partner for life, and so ignorant of the sacredness, duties and responsibilities of the holy state of wedlock, as to give his or her hand in marriage to one who is not a Catholic. It is with reluctance the Church grants the dispensation asked for, and only because she fears the consequences which might follow her refusal. Could she foresee that no evil would result; that the applicant for a dispensation would accept her ruling and abandon all idea of marrying anyone but a member of God's Church, no dispensation would be granted. She knows however that in many cases her wishes will not be respected; that marriage before a justice or a minister, with all its evils would follow her refusal of the dispensation asked for, and it is to prevent such misfortunes as these that she permits under certain conditions a Mixed Marriage. At the same time however, she makes no attempt to conceal her real feelings in the matter. She wants all to know how distasteful to her is the granting of a dispensation to one of her children to marry a non-Catholic. With this end in view she makes it difficult to obtain the desired dispensation. The power to grant it she withholds from Pastor and from Bishop and gives to the Pope alone. Even the Holy Father is not em-

powered to dispense from her law forbidding Mixed Marriages, except under certain conditions. The non-Catholic must promise that he or she shall never in any way interfere with the Catholic party to the marriage, in the discharge of his or her religious duty, and that all children that may be born to their union shall be raised Catholics. The Catholic wife, or husband, must promise that he or she will, after marriage, do all in his or her power to bring the unbelieving spouse to the true faith. The priest before whom these promises are made, must be morally certain that there is no danger of the Catholic party to the marriage losing his or her faith through association with his or her unbelieving spouse. He must be morally certain also, that the children who may be born to them, shall be brought up in the Catholic faith. Should the priest before whom the required promises are made, be uncertain about their fulfillment, no dispensation can be granted for the marriage, and should it be granted, it is of no value. Such, my brethren, is the law of God's Church. More than this, she declares that if there be danger of loss of faith in the Catholic party to a Mixed Marriage, or of loss of faith to the children born of such marriage, the union would be a violation of the Divine Law itself. Do not imagine young woman, that because the promises exacted by the Church have been made, she is delighted in granting you a dispensation to marry one who is not of your own faith. She is not delighted; she would prefer being called upon for your burial certificate, rather than for a permit for you to enter the holy state of matrimony with an unbeliever. The priest who is called upon to officiate at your marriage is not pleased either. He regrets that necessity compels him to honor by his presence, a marriage which his Church does not approve of. His Eminence Cardinal Vaughan for the purpose of emphasizing the opposition of the Church to Mixed Marriages, in an Allocution given

at the Diocesan Synod of Westminster, held in 1898, ordered that henceforth no Bishop of the Province should officiate at a marriage where both of the contracting parties should not be Catholics. Some of our American Bishops follow the same practice. Many Pastors too, throughout this country, in order to express their disapproval of these unions, and unwilling to be a party to a contract which must be more or less detrimental to God's glory and the salvation of souls, make it a rule never to assist at a Mixed Marriage.

As a further evidence of the attitude of the Catholic Church towards Mixed Marriages let me remind you of the difference between the ceremony prescribed for a sanctioned marriage—both parties being Catholics—and that in which one of the contracting parties is a non-Catholic. The Church is anxious, that when two Catholics marry, the marriage ceremony be associated with the specially-appointed Nuptial Mass. She recedes, as it were, from the ordinary custom and permits bride and groom to enter the sanctuary, that kneeling before the altar, whilst ministering angels bow down in adoration and sing their glad hosannas to their Lord in the tabernacle, they may seal the most sacred of compacts in the Blood of Christ. The officiating priest interrogates both of the contracting parties about their consent to the marriage. When they have declared their desire to then and there enter into the holy state of matrimony and to live together as man and wife, "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health" until death parts them, he confirms and blesses the contract into which they have entered in these words: "I join you together in marriage, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen." Then, the ring which betokens a close bond of union, is blessed with the words: "Bless, O Lord, this ring which we bless in Thy Name, that she who is to wear it, keeping true faith unto her husband, may abide in Thy peace

and obedience to Thy will, and ever live in mutual love, through Christ Our Lord, Amen." The Nuptial Mass follows, during which Jesus is as truly present as He was when He stood in the midst of the guests who surrounded the happy couple at the wedding of Cana in Galilee. During this Mass, and on no other occasion, the Canon is interrupted for the bestowal upon bride and groom of the Nuptial Blessing. After the Pater Noster the Priest, turning towards the newly-married couple, kneeling before him, prays: "Be favorable, O Lord, unto our prayers, and graciously protect Thine ordinance, whereby Thou hast provided for the propagation of mankind; that what is now joined together by Thine authority may be preserved by Thy help. Through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, Our God, world without end. Amen." This prayer is followed by a second: "O God, Who by the might of Thy power didst make all things out of nothing; Who, when the foundations of the world were laid, and man was made in Thy image, didst so ordain the inseparable aid of woman, as to give her body its origin from that of man: teaching thereby that what it had pleased Thee to fashion out of one, could never be lawfully put asunder; O God, Who has consecrated wedlock to so excellent a mystery, that in the marriage covenant Thou wouldst foreshadow the mysterious union of Christ with His Church: O God, by Whom woman is joined to man and that union, established in the beginning, given a blessing, which was the only one not taken away as part of the punishment inflicted for the sin of our first parents; the only one left untouched by Thy wrath at the time of the Flood, look graciously down upon this Thy handmaid, now joined in marriage, who heartily desires to be strengthened by Thy protection. May love and peace abound in her life; faithful and chaste may she marry in Christ. May she ever imitate the holy women

of former times. May she be pleasing to her husband like Rachel; discreet like Rebecca; long-lived and faithful like Sarah. In none of her deeds may the author of evil have any share. May she be firm in faith and in the commandments. May she be true to her engagements and flee all unlawful addresses. May she fortify her weakness by the strength of Thy discipline. May she be gravely bashful, venerably modest and well learned in the doctrine of heaven. May she be fruitful in offspring; approved and blameless, and attain unto the rest of the Blessed in Thy heavenly kingdom. May they both see their children's children unto the third and fourth generation and live to a happy old age. Through the same Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, Our God, world without end. Amen." After these impressive prayers Mass is continued and at the usual time Bride and Groom are given Holy Communion that this Sacred Food may fill them with divine grace and enable them to scrupulously fulfill the many duties which married life is to impose upon them. Before the usual blessing of the congregation given at the end of Mass, the celebrant turns towards the newly wedded couple and invokes over them the blessing: "May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob be with you, and may He fulfill His blessings in you, that you may see your children's children to the third and fourth generations, and afterwards have life everlasting, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, Our God, world without end. Amen." The bride and groom are then sprinkled with holy water. Such, my brethren, is marriage entered into in accordance with the wishes of our Holy Mother and blessed by her as becomes a holy union; "a great sacrament—in Christ and in the Church" (Ephes v. 22).

Very different, my brethren, is the attitude of the Church

towards a marriage in which one of her children is joined to an unbeliever. This union is no cause of joy to her, but rather a source of sorrow and of anxiety. It is entered into against her wishes; in spite of her warnings. Whilst she is compelled to give a reluctant consent to it—to avoid greater evils which would result were her representative not a witness to the marriage contract—she does not approve of it. The ceremony which she permits on these occasions, shows the utter abhorrence with which she regards these unholy alliances. She forbids the publication of the banns, lest it might appear that she in any way countenanced a Mixed Marriage. It is her wish that it be entered into, as it were, stealthily, as becomes an act which is no credit to the contracting Catholic party, and of which she herself is ashamed. The Nuptial Mass is not permitted, nor may the nuptial blessing be given. The marriage ceremony may not take place within the Church, in the presence of Him Whose will the disobedient Catholic disregards, nor even in the sacristy, but in the Parochial Residence. The Priest who assists at the marriage is not pleased with the duty which he must perform. He may conceal his displeasure, yet at heart he regrets being party to a contract which has not the approval of heaven. Unlike other occasions on which he is called to officiate, he wears neither surplice nor stole—emblems of God-given authority. He is divested of every insignia of his sacred office, to accentuate the fact that he is not there in the capacity of a minister of Christ, to act in Christ's Name, in Christ's stead and with Christ's authority, as he does in the performance of other duties. He is forbidden to say any prayer or to perform any liturgical act. The ceremony as prescribed by the Church is very brief. The priest asks the bridegroom: "Wilt thou take . . . here present as thy lawful wife?" The bridegroom answers: "I will." The priest then asks the bride: "Wilt thou take . . . here present as thy law-

ful husband?" She answers: "I will." Then, with joined hands each, in turn, repeats: "I take thee for my lawful wife (husband) to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part." The priest then says: "By the authority committed to me, I pronounce you man and wife." The bridegroom then places the wedding ring on the finger of the bride, saying: "With this ring I thee wed and I plight unto thee my troth." Thus ends the ceremony as prescribed by the Church for the celebration of a Mixed Marriage. At no time during it may the sign of the cross be made; no candle, emblem of faith, may burn. There is to be no sprinkling of holy water; no blessing given the contracting parties. I have read of an old missionary priest who was in the habit of concluding his sermon on Mixed Marriages by holding up a Ritual—the book which contains the prayers, etc., to be used in the various blessings approved and authorized by the Church—and saying: "This Ritual contains blessings of all kinds, for sick children, for sick women, for sick people in general. It contains blessings for houses, fruits, flowers, churches, schools, cemeteries, hospitals, ships and even for barns. If you have a sick animal—horse, cow or hog—you may call the priest and ask him to bless the sick brute, and he will do so. But, you can go through this book, from cover to cover, and you'll find no blessing for a Mixed Marriage." No more conclusive evidence can be brought forward to show that Mixed Marriages are despised by our Holy Church, than the fact that no blessing is given them.

After what has been said to you, this evening, my brethren, you can have no doubt either of the opinion which your Holy Church entertains of Mixed Marriages, or of her earnest desire that all her members shun these forbidden unions. She is the best, kindest, the most indulgent of mothers. At all

times she is disposed to overlook the delinquencies of her children. Like her Divine Founder, Whose representative she is, she would ever show them mercy and spare them! Like Him at Cana, she would send the newly-married couple into the world with her blessing. The decided stand she takes and has ever taken against Mixed Marriages is a convincing argument that these marriages should be avoided by all who belong to her. One has no right to consider himself, a loyal, devout, dutiful child of Holy Mother Church, whose conduct, especially in the all-important matter of Matrimony is not guided by her direction.

MIXED MARRIAGES

(Third Sermon)

ATTITUDE OF CHURCH TOWARDS MIXED MARRIAGES JUSTIFIED

IN our previous instructions on Mixed Marriages we have endeavored to impress you with the fact that our Holy Church has been at all times unalterably opposed to these unions. In our opening sermon we showed you that in forbidding these marriages the Church has not made a law, but rather has insisted on the observance of one which God Himself had imposed on the Jewish people, ages before the Savior's coming. In our last discourse our object was to convince you that the fact of the Church granting a dispensation under certain conditions to one of her fold to marry an outsider, cannot be regarded as an approval of Mixed Marriages. The Church is never pleased with the marriage of a Catholic to one who is without her pale. It is because of pressing reasons that she relaxes in particular cases, her law against such marriages, after having first exacted certain promises and guarantees in order to diminish as much as possible the dangers and evil consequences of these unions. Lest the dispensation she grants on such occasions might be interpreted as an approval of Mixed Marriages, she emphasizes her hostility towards them by the ceremonial she has prescribed for him, who, as her representative, is to officiate at their performance. In our present instruction, as well as in others which are to follow, we hope to justify the judgment of the Church in condemning and forbidding these unholy unions.

There is no denying the fact that marriage with one of a different religious belief, cannot but interfere more or less

with the performance of duties which a Catholic assumes on entering the married state. Living with a non-Catholic spouse must tend in a hundred different ways to lessen religious fervor, to weaken faith, if not to destroy faith altogether. That such has been in many cases, the result of Mixed Marriages is beyond question. It is not surprising that this is true. It would be surprising were it to be otherwise. We know that even under most favorable conditions, it is a difficult work to save one's soul. To contend courageously, constantly and successfully with the world, the flesh and the devil is beyond our unaided powers. We need in this struggle the aids, and graces which our Heavenly Father has provided for us. Many of those helps which we find in married life, when husband and wife are both members of God's Church, are wanting in Mixed Marriages. In these unions husband and wife are separated at an unspeakable distance in all that concerns the soul,—its faith, its needs, its aspirations. There can be no community of feeling in what should be the chief sentiment of life; no speaking together on those matters which concern God and the world to come. Had one no other guide than reason, this of itself would convince him, that in spite of the best intentions, a non-Catholic husband or a non-Catholic wife can be no helpmate to a Catholic partner in the all-important affair of salvation. I am well aware that in certain individual cases, the dangers which generally threaten the Catholic parent and his or her children, are somewhat lessened by the good will of the non-Catholic partner, and his or her honest endeavor to fulfill all the conditions under which the Church gave her sanction to their marriage. These dispositions, coupled with circumstances over which the married couple have no control, sometimes lessen very much the evil consequences of these forbidden unions. Even in these rare cases however, married life is not, and cannot be, what the Creator intended it should

be. A Catholic woman, for instance, married to a non-Catholic is not where God intended she should be. She has placed herself in a position where she will find it difficult, if not impossible to discharge the many duties which wedded life imposes on her, and thereby save her soul. She has rushed headlong into a Mixed Marriage without coolly and seriously and prayerfully considering the possible consequences of her step. Before entering into any other contract she would carefully consider the ends to be gained and the best means of securing these ends. If it be but the purchase of a horse, a piano or an auto the bargain will not be closed without a careful examination of the property whose purchase is contemplated, a thoughtful consideration of its true value, and of its fitness for the purpose for which it is desired. In marriage however—the most important of all affairs—in a majority of cases, no such precautions are taken. That, from a Christian standpoint, the great concern of every creature is to attain salvation is indisputable. Yet, it too often happens that the young woman contemplating marriage, does so with no thought of eternity. She gives her hand in wedlock without considering the seriousness of the step she takes. Should she reflect for a moment, her thoughts are concerned solely with her earthly prospects, not with her eternal welfare. How seldom does one of our Catholic girls, sought in marriage by a non-Catholic, pause and seriously ask herself: "Will marriage with this man help me on in the love of God, will it make me better, more virtuous, more holy? Will it aid me in attaining the end for which my God created me, and my Redeemer died? If such results cannot be reasonably hoped for, my Heavenly Father never intended that this man should be my husband." If a Catholic young woman cannot assure herself that she has reason to believe that her perfection will be advanced, her love of God be more and more increased by marriage, she should remain single. She takes

an awful risk in becoming the wife of any man who is not a member of her church, and who does not realize that both he and she have interests in the next world which they must labor here to make secure. Our Heavenly Father in constituting man and woman so differently and in ordaining marriage for them, designed that each in this union should be a more perfect being than in partition; that their two natures should supply each other with what is best in each and so make of them a new and a more perfect whole. They should live but one life, sharing all of each other's joys, cares, sorrows and hopes. There should not be a corner in the nature and occupation of either which is not open to the other. There should be a flowing together of heart and of soul in close communion and perfect confidence. They should be wedded in their highest—their spiritual natures. There should be between them a mutual concern, not only about their temporal affairs, but about their soul's holiest interests and the realities of eternity. This is the married state as God intended it should be. I repeat, that the Catholic woman who enters into marriage with a non-Catholic places herself in a position where her Creator never intended she should be, and which will make it very difficult for her to save her soul.

Let me anticipate and answer an objection to what has been said against Mixed Marriages, which is on the tongue of every Catholic young woman who contemplates giving her hand in wedlock to one who is not a member of her church. Whilst admitting that these condemned unions are unmistakably wrong, she will claim that her marriage will be an exceptional one; that the gentleman with whom she is keeping company and to whom she is engaged is a most wonderful character, the dearest, sweetest, noblest creature on earth. She has no fear that alliance with him will lessen her love of God, or her concern about the interests of eternity. Re-

mind her of others—some of whom perhaps were well known to her—who had entertained similar notions about their intended husbands and were sadly deceived, and she will answer that she has no fear. Her intended is a *gentleman, a man of honor*, in whose words she has implicit confidence. Already he had made her the promises which the Church will exact of him, and she *knows* he will keep these promises. It is astonishing how incompetent creatures become when there is question of passing judgment on one with whom marriage is contemplated. We have all of us, no doubt been present at nuptials where it was evident that the matrimonial bark was in for a very rough voyage. Storms were ahead of it, in plain view of all,—the newly-married couple alone excepted. There is an old saying about the blindness of love, whose truth no one can question. We can all recall marriages which blindness alone would account for. I myself have on many occasions assisted at nuptials, with a moral certainty that misery, eventually culminating in a divorce court, would be their outcome. I felt certain that whilst God had created the parties standing before me and pledging their love to each other until death should part them, He had never intended them to be man and wife; that someone besides the Creator had matched them; that their union was never planned in heaven, but elsewhere. When therefore a Catholic young woman will endeavor to justify her contemplated marriage to one who is not of her faith, on the plea that he is an exceptional man, a gentleman, a man of integrity and actually inclined to become a Catholic, one is very much disposed to classify her with the many other boobs who have come beneath his notice. However, for the sake of argument, we will accept her defense of this non-Catholic gentleman. We will grant too, that her confidence in his integrity was not mis-placed. That after marriage he proved himself a man of honor, by actually living up to every promise

he had made previous to his marriage. I still insist, that the union of this Catholic young woman to this honorable non-Catholic gentleman is not conducive to her eternal salvation. No matter how broad-minded he may be he cannot conceal the fact that he has but little regard for his wife's religion. The duties of hearing Mass, approaching the Sacraments, observing the fast and the abstinence days, saying her morning and her evening prayers and of contributing generously to the support of God's Church, do not appeal to him, whom she has vowed to love. Whilst, we are supposing, he does not ridicule her religion, nor object to her performing her religious duties, still it is evident that he looks upon her belief as nothing else than a bundle of superstitions, good enough for women and for children, but so devoid of all real merit, that thinking men—like himself—can give it no serious attention. So, between them a barrier is necessarily raised, preventing real union of hearts and harmony of sentiments, as well as that true love which is centered in God. The wife has from infancy been trained to regard eternity with its rewards, its glories and its never-ending pleasures as the only object that is worth contending for. In her efforts during married life to attain perfection and save her immortal soul, she gets no assistance from him whom she has taken as a partner until death parts them. Whilst he, in many ways, is all a husband should be, he gives her no help, no encouragement in matters which, from her standpoint, are most important. In temporal affairs, he is her helpmate; in the great concern of eternity, she is left to battle alone. She is alone when at home she kneels in prayer; alone at Holy Mass in the House of God; alone at the altar railing when Jesus comes into her soul. Her mind at no time is at peace, being constantly worried over the spiritual welfare of him to whom she is joined in wedlock and fearful that they shall not be together in the land of the blessed.

Let me remind you of another consequence of the indifference of the unbelieving husband to the spiritual welfare of his Catholic wife. Whilst, we are granting, he does not object to her obeying all the precepts of her Church, he is not always disposed to make it easy or possible for her to do so. He will not see the necessity of her going to Mass every Sunday especially as there are so many duties at home which require her attention. He feels too that his comfort and convenience should be given consideration. He has been busy all week and should, he thinks, be entitled to Sunday for himself. He is not, we are supposing, opposed to his wife going to Mass on Sundays or performing any other religious duty, but he is not willing that she or her Church interfere with his plans, his pleasures, in order that something may be done which he cannot see the necessity of. So it will often happen that on account of her household duties and the care of her little ones, she will find it impossible either to hear Mass on Sundays or to even make her Easter Communion. This Catholic woman who before marriage could be seen each morning at Holy Mass and frequently at the altar railing has entered upon a career which has ended fatally for many others similarly situated. Her prayers at one time frequent and fervent are now generally neglected. She is no longer the devout woman she once had been. Her thoughts, her ideals, her habits have changed. God and religion have passed out of her life. In many cases years go by during which this Catholic wife and mother has been practically outside the pale of God's Church. We need not speculate as to what the consequence of such a life must be. We priests know what it has been in innumerable cases which have come to our notice. We are constantly meeting with mothers whose faith has either actually deserted them or at least has lost its fervor. That lively interest in all which concerns God and things eternal which once controlled their souls has disap-

peared; that zeal for the salvation of others and for the welfare of Christ's Church which once manifested itself in their lives has vanished; that burning love for Jesus dwelling in the tabernacle which characterized them before marriage, is no more. In one word there is nothing in anything they do or say, which would lead one to conclude they are, or ever had been, members of the Catholic Church. Neither tepidity in all which concerns the interests of eternity, nor total extinction of faith which often result when for years a non-Catholic husband fails to make it easy or possible for his Catholic wife to discharge the duties of her religion, is to be feared when both parties are Catholics.

In some cases the non-Catholic husband is a member of one of the Protestant sects. If he were true to the teachings of his religion he would never be a party to a Mixed Marriage. All evangelical Churches are as much opposed to these unions as our Church is. From their standpoint, opposition to the Mixed Marriage is logical and to be commended. Occasionally a member of one of these Protestant sects becomes the husband of a Catholic wife. He makes all the promises that are exacted of him. Still, it can hardly be claimed for him that at heart he means to bind himself forever to these promises. The fact of his attendance at a Protestant church is apt to cause his Catholic wife to be carried away by that false teaching, so prevalent in our time and country, which claims that all religions are good and that it really does not make any difference to which church one belongs provided one conscientiously lives up to its teachings. She is apt to feel at heart, even though she gives no expression to her views, that her Church is too severe in condemning heresy, and in declaring that all must belong to her, or be condemned for unbelief. Her husband, she states, is a good man; he is in fact much better than most Catholics she knows, and she is certain that heaven will be his portion

in eternity. The Protestant husband, even though he promised never to interfere with his wife in the performance of her religious duties, has her conversion to his church always in view. He does not oppose her attendance at Mass or Sundays, and sometimes accompanies her. In return, he asks that she go occasionally to his church. There is no harm in doing this, she reasons, especially as she has no thought of taking part in the worship, and she goes. She perhaps listens to a sermon attacking the Divinity of Jesus Christ or some other doctrine dear to every Catholic heart. May be, because of her presence the preacher opens the vials of his wrath on the poor old Pope or attacks Indulgences, the Mass, Confession or devotion to our Blessed Mother. That Catholic woman leaves the Protestant Church less a Catholic than when she entered there. Soon afterwards some of the lady members of the congregation pay her a visit. Our Savior has told us that the Pharisees of his time would travel land and sea to make a convert. It is astonishing how zealous our church-going non-Catholics become in their efforts to capture a Catholic in whom they notice the least symptom of lukewarmness. They can look with unconcern upon the many about them who have no religion whatever, but just as soon as they see the chance of winning over to Protestantism a weak-kneed, backsliding Catholic, they are capable of going to any extreme. Should the visitors whom I have mentioned, find that this Catholic woman is in need, they imagine the conquest will be easy. They expect that with groceries and cast-off clothing for herself and her little ones, they will soon open their eyes to the iniquities of Rome. It is made very clear to her that for the help they shall give, she and her children must renounce Romanism and become members of her husband's Church. Should these Protestant visitors find that the Catholic woman is not in need, they change their tactics. They invite her to a sewing-bee, an excursion, a

strawberry festival, or to a tea-party and she goes. Whilst these affairs are in themselves harmless, for a Catholic woman joined to a Protestant husband, they are nothing short of pitfalls. Next, the Catholic wife is visited by the minister and his wife. The reverend gentleman makes a decided hit. He proves to be a lovely man; very much nicer than her pastor. He completely won the mother's heart by the interest he showed for the welfare of her children. From this time on, this Catholic woman mingles freely with people who hate her holy religion. She gradually grows fond of their society. It is much more select than that met with in Catholic circles, where so many are poor and ignorant and devoid of social standing in the community where they dwell. The little children of this Catholic mother are invited to parties by their Protestant neighbors, and are allowed to go. At Christmas they attend the Church Christmas Tree and are remembered by Santa Claus. In a short time, we find them in the Protestant Sunday School. They and their mother before long are full-pledged Protestants. Such is the result in some cases of the Mixed Marriage. It is said by those who are in a position to know, that because of non-Catholic environment, a Mixed Marriage in the Southern States is almost certain to bring about the perversion of the Catholic party. They who know anything about conditions in the outlying districts of your own State, can testify that the same is true there also. Even in large centers of population, where Catholic churches and Catholic schools are everywhere to be found, some of our members slip away from us because of the propagandism of Protestant sects through the medium of the Mixed Marriage. Such apostasies as these are possible, of course, only in the case of very ignorant, indevout and ill-instructed women. Unfortunately, many women married to non-Catholics are to be so qualified. They are really ignorant, indevout and ill-instructed. Were they

stanch in their faith, fervent in their devotions and well informed in the history and teachings of their religion they would never have entered into marriage with an unbeliever. Most of them from early youth had been lacking in real piety. They could not be classified with those who were frequently seen at the altar railing, or who dearly loved the Mother of God and each day devoutly said her rosary. Their faith and its demands were never permitted to interfere with their worldly prospects. They were prepared to sacrifice it at any time for silks and satins, pearls and diamonds, autos and servants. Their indifference in spiritual matters was accentuated and increased by the evil influences of a Mixed Marriage and made their rejection of their Church easy and natural.

The picture which I have presented to you this morning has not been overdrawn. All of you, without doubt, can recall many instances which have fallen under your notice, where Catholic women and their children have been lost to God's Church in the manner in which I have described. Some of you perhaps could testify that in your own lives the awful results of the Mixed Marriage are to be seen. You, too, had been told of the evil consequences which flow from these unblessed unions, but heeded not. You thought you knew better than the priest and you took a chance. I dare say that if you be honest, you will now confess that you blundered most seriously in doing so, and that you will lift your voices to warn all Catholics against the condemned Mixed Marriage.

MIXED MARRIAGES

(Fourth Sermon)

BROKEN PROMISES

IN a previous instruction on the subject of Mixed Marriages, we endeavored to show you, my brethren, how productive of evil, association of a Catholic woman with an unbelieving husband, must necessarily be, even though he be a gentleman, and keep the promises he made the Church, of in no way interfering with his wife in the observance of her religious duties. Such a union may appear to be all that the Catholic Church looks for. This, however, is far from being the case. No Mixed Marriage is satisfactory to God's Church. All of them fall below her ideal, and are accordingly unequivocally condemned and deprecated by her. If under certain conditions she permits them, it is through fear of the awful consequences which would follow were she to refuse a dispensation permitting one of her members to enter wedlock with an unbeliever. From our consideration of what might be regarded as the best Mixed Marriage imaginable—one in which the non-Catholic husband keeps all promises he had made the Church before his marriage to his Catholic wife—it must be admitted that even this, is more or less fatal in its consequences and therefore has been justly condemned by God's Church. A young woman entering into such a union, does so against the judgment of her religion; with the testimony of experience warning her against taking a step which is very apt in many ways to prove fatal, even though her intended should be throughout their married life a man of honor. We are this evening to consider the misfortunes which assail the Catholic wife when her husband fails to live up to the promises he had made before marriage.

In the great majority of Mixed Marriages there is more or less interference with the wife in the observance of her religious duties, on the part of the non-Catholic husband, despite the promises which he had made before marriage. We recall one instance where a newly-married couple had just left the parochial residence, after the performance of the wedding ceremony. The bride, no doubt, was happy. She had reason, she probably thought, to look forward to years of married bliss. She never suspected that he to whom she had just given her hand in matrimony would ever prove false to the promises he had made her. We can hardly imagine the horror, the bitter disappointment, which seized her soul as he to whom she had given her whole being said to her as they were passing her parish church: "Take a good look at your old church. So long as you are my wife you shall never enter it." This case perhaps will appeal to you as a very extraordinary one. To him, however, who is in a position to know, it is a fair sample of the ordinary Mixed Marriage. In the majority of these unions there is a failure of the non-Catholic husband to keep the promises which he had made before marriage. In some cases the nuptial knot has been scarcely tied, as in the one to which I have just made reference, before the young bride makes the terrible discovery that her liberal-minded spouse is a bigot of the deepest dye. Irreverent words, obscure allusions and blasphemous aspersions concerning sacred persons, places and things are constantly on his lips. His wife's devotions are denounced as mummary and superstition. Her piety is ridiculed as an evidence of weak-mindedness. Pictures of the Sacred Heart, of the Blessed Mother and of other saints are laughed at and destroyed. Crucifixes and statues are broken. The foulest calumnies and slanders against God's Church are ever on the tongue of him, who before marriage pretended to have such great admiration for Catholicity that he was

seriously thinking of becoming a Catholic. This same deceiver, in some cases, has been known after marriage to give expression to his contempt for religion and its devotions by kicking and beating his wife as she kneels at prayer. These are not rare cases, but on the contrary, they are very, very common. Men, who would, before marriage have themselves regarded as gentlemen, often, after marriage, prove to be brutes. Men, who before marriage, succeeded in impressing gullible young women with their broad-mindedness in religious matters, often, after marriage prove to be the worst of bigots. Hardly has the marriage ceremony been performed than they solemnly declare that they will allow no priest, no church to interfere in *their* family affairs. A life of misery is certain for her who allows herself to despise the warnings of God's Church and gives her hand in wedlock to one who turns out to be a bigot. Her sorrows, perhaps, shall be concealed from her neighbors, yea, often from those who are dearest to her. God and his priest only, shall be given an insight into that soul crushed by regret, anguish and bitter disappointment.

There are other husbands who flatter themselves on being liberal-minded, who have no objection to their wives practicing all duties of religion provided their own private affairs, comforts and pleasures are in no way interfered with. They do not object to their children being raised Catholics, but they are most positive in forbidding their wives to send their little ones to schools where the love of God will be instilled into their young hearts. In the mind of a good Catholic mother there is no doubt about the soundness of the contention of her church concerning the necessity of a Christian Education for her children. This Church she believes to be the same Church which her Savior founded nineteen hundred years ago and sent into the world to represent Him and to teach His heavenly doctrines. "All power is given to Me

in heaven and on earth; going therefore teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 18). Never, in the matter of Education, has there been any doubt in the mind of the Church on the security of her position. Always has she looked upon the Parochial School as something absolutely necessary for propagating the faith of Christ. Always has she regarded the Parish, having no school, as not properly equipped for doing God's work. The system of Education in vogue in this country, we Catholics cannot sanction. Whilst we admit that there is much about it which is admirable, it is lacking in one feature which to us is all-important. I refer to the fact that it neglects the most important of the interests in which the child is concerned—the eternal salvation of his soul. Its disregard of God and of the human soul and its destiny after death has resulted in a nation of unbelievers. Wherever you turn in this country unbelief is rampant. In the non-Catholic churches of America but a handful of worshippers are gathered on Sundays. The great bulk of those who are classed as Protestants, are Christians in name only. They are attached to no particular Church; subscribe to no particular religious tenets; do not know even the essential doctrine which Jesus taught. Our own Church, too, as a result of this godless system, sees her little ones torn from her by the millions; she sees most of those who still remain attached to her, devoid of true Catholic faith, worldly in principle and with no concern for the interests of Jesus Christ. The remedy for these evils is the Catholic School. Our Holy Church claims now, as she has claimed from the beginning, that for the inculcation of religious principles, religion must be taught as other subjects are taught, by the daily lesson, explained by skillful and ex-

perienced teachers and especially in an atmosphere of piety and religion such as pervades the Parish School. We claim as indisputable the contention of our religion that it is only by placing the Christian yoke upon the child in its tender years, that it will grow up to manhood and to womanhood, finding this yoke agreeable, and persevere in the discharge of those spiritual duties which will insure it eternal salvation in the life to come. How to carry on this work of Christian Education would be a problem were it not that in every age the Holy Ghost has inspired saintly men and women to sacrifice all which earth esteems that they devote their efforts in behalf of the eternal welfare of those little ones for whom the Savior died. These zealous teachers aim at sending into the world men and women able to contend with all others in the matter of secular education, whilst convinced that the end of their existence is not the enjoyment of the pleasures of earth; not the amassing of riches; not the gaining of worldly honors; but the saving of their souls. Good Catholic parents realize that they fail in the discharge of the most important of all duties they owe their children, if they neglect to give them a Christian Education. In a family where the father is a non-Catholic, almost invariably the children are sent to the Public Schools. The mother may be anxious to have her little ones trained by devoted religious, but her husband objects, although he had promised before marriage that he would never interfere with his wife in the discharge of her religious duties and specifically, that he would not object to her raising their children Catholics. Hardly one of these husbands will allow his children to go to a Catholic school. Times innumerable they have been heard to remark: "The Public Schools were good enough for me, and should be good enough for my sons and daughters." The consequence of the lack of religious training in the education of the children of our day, is evident in

the irreligion, the immorality, the disregard of all authority, human as well as divine, that is about us. The good Catholic mother is anxious that her children be given a solid Christian training, in order that they may be prepared to stand firm and unshaken amidst onslaughts which in after years will be made on their faith and virtue, but her non-Catholic husband opposes her wishes, despite the promises he had made before marriage.

The non-Catholic husband interferes again with his Catholic wife in the discharge of her religious duties, when he does not permit her to contribute in proportion to her means to the support of her religion. This duty his wife recognizes. She believes that her Heavenly Father demands from all His creatures not only their love and worship, but also for the maintenance of His Church and for the spread of His religion amongst men, a portion of the worldly goods with which he has blessed their labors. This obligation no one accepting the Sacred Scriptures as God's revealed word can call in question. The Old Testament informs us that Jehovah gave no inheritance to His priests, as He did to the other tribes, because He demanded that they who serve Him at the altar, must be supported by their brethren. The amount which each Jew was to give annually for the maintenance of religion was not a matter left to his own pleasure, but was fixed by God Himself and declared to be, not an alms, given out of charity, but a matter of strictest justice. He Who claimed from His people one day in seven for His service, insisted also that a tithe—one-tenth part of their produce, as well as of their flocks and cattle—be promptly and cheerfully paid each year for the propagation of His religion among men. No Hebrew was so poor but that he obeyed this law; set aside each year one-tenth of all his products as a portion holy and sacred because it was God's share. With this assessment the work of the kingdom was carried on, the Le-

vites were supported, and the temple expenses were met. Besides support of the priesthood and the maintenance of the temple, the Israelites were assessed a second tithe for the worthy celebration of festival days and for the fostering of the patriotic spirit amongst them and a third tithe, every third year, for the needs of the poor. Our Blessed Lord established His Church on the same principle. He might have sent His angels to proclaim His gospel from one end of the world to the other. He might have written it on the sky where all could read but this would deprive his creatures of the privilege and of the merit of assisting Him. He would make of us co-laborers, so that we may share in the fruits of the harvest, both now and in eternity. He chose for His work of converting the world twelve poor men. He sent them to continue the mission which He had inaugurated and demanded that they be supported and assisted by those for whose salvation they were to labor. "Go, behold I send you as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes. . . . Into whatsoever house you enter . . . in the same remain eating and drinking such things as they have; for the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke x. 3). The faithful Catholic is ever mindful of the obligation which membership in God's Church imposes on him, of contributing generously to the needs of this Church. It is an occasion of sorrow to him when he considers, on the one hand, the glorious things which his Church was intended to effect, and on the other, the little which she has actually accomplished after nineteen hundred years of battle; how little she is doing now in making known the Master's saving truths to unbelieving nations; how badly she is handicapped even in our own favored land because of the failure of her members to contribute generously to her needs. Amongst the delinquents who must account for their stewardships on Judgment Day will be those Catholic women who through the Mixed Marriage have

robbed God of His dues and denied to His Church that support to which she is entitled. I take it for granted, my brethren, that you are all well aware that as a rule the Catholic woman who is the wife of a non-Catholic contributes but very little to the maintenance of religion and to the furtherance of the many undertakings which aim at promoting the honor and glory of the Creator and the salvation of souls.

There is another way in which the non-Catholic husband fails in keeping the promise he had made not to interfere with his Catholic wife in the discharge of her religious duties. The matter to which I refer, for obvious reasons, can only be hinted at. It is, however, too productive of evil to be passed over entirely. The non-Catholic husband, as a rule, is controlled by no religious principle. You need not be told that the average American has no practical religion. He is a Christian in name only. He has no regard for virtue; no idea of morality. He will claim *that* to be right, which his Catholic wife knows to be forbidden by God's law. For instance, he will reject the Catholic teaching that one purpose of marriage is to provide for the propagation of the human race, and deny the obligation of husband and wife to accept all the children which the Creator may wish to send them. Children, by him are regarded as cares, burdens and nuisances; interfering with and spoiling life's pleasures and pastimes. To be a parent is not esteemed by such as he a great privilege, but rather a calamity to be dreaded and avoided by all means lawful and unlawful. Hence in these United States there are innumerable homes which are willfully and willingly unblest by little ones. There are thousands of young wives with shattered health, going down to premature graves because they, at their husband's command, seek to avoid what the Creator has made for every married woman, her highest honor and chiefest good—children who shall rise up and call her blessed (Prov. xxxi. 28). You

need hardly be reminded, my brethren, that any act by which the married couple strive to defeat the law of nature and render futile God's purpose in instituting matrimony, is a crime so heinous in the Creator's sight that even here on earth it is calculated to bring down upon offenders heaven's curse, as well as an eternal punishment in the world to come. The law which forbids artificial birth control is not primarily an ecclesiastical law. The precept which forbids this perversion is contained in the natural law. Birth control therefore is something wrong in itself, independent of human or of ecclesiastical legislation. It follows then that no necessity whatsoever, can ever, even in a single instance, excuse or tolerate it. No nation, no State, no church can legitimize it. No circumstance can palliate it, or make it other than what it really is,—a horrible perversion of a natural function, demoralizing the individuals who practice it, and in its tendency destructive of society. In the life of a Catholic woman married to an unbeliever there will often be occasions when the will of her husband and her own conscience must clash. She will be coerced into doing things which she knows to be wrong. There are Catholic wives who for years have been kept away from the sacraments because they are being forced into actions which their faith condemns. Should one of this class refuse to do the will of her unbelieving husband in opposition to God's law, the divorce court would be invoked to sever their union; to license him to forsake her and to seek another, who will be subservient to his wishes. For the Catholic wife there can be no divorce. She regards marriage as the most sacred, the most inviolable and irrevocable of all contracts. Every human compact can be lawfully dissolved, that between husband and wife alone excepted. There is scarcely a moral precept more strongly insisted on in God's Holy Word than the indissoluble character of marriage, validly contracted. The Pharisees once asked

Our Divine Lord the question: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? Who, answering, said to them: Have ye not read that He Who made man from the beginning made them male and female? And He said; For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife and they two shall be one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together let no man put asunder. They say to Him: Why, then, did Moses command to give a bill of divorce and to put away? He saith to them: Because Moses, by reason of the hardness of your heart, permitted you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be fornication and shall marry another committeth adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. xix. 39). In these words Our Divine Teacher emphatically declares that the marriage bond is ratified by God Himself and that no man, no court, no human legislation can dissolve it. This teaching of Jesus on Divorce is unwelcome in this licentious age, but it certainly cannot be said of it that it is complicated, equivocal or obscure. A Catholic wife accepts the law as laid down by her Savior as her guide for life. Without reservation, without equivocation she gives herself until death comes, to her husband, no matter what trials and vicissitudes may beset them. In the Mixed Marriage, however, he but loans himself to her. He repeats the words of the marriage ceremony: "I take thee for my lawful wife, to have and to hold this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health until death do us part," but does not mean what he says. He accepts her hand conditionally. She is to be regarded as his wife so long as she suits him. When she fails to do so, it is his privilege, most natural and most reasonable, he thinks, to cast her upon the world and get another in her

stead. Marriage is nothing, in his estimation, but a bargain entered into by husband and wife, to be ended at the pleasure of either. Young woman, abandonment by him to whom you may give your hand in matrimony is one of the many dangers which shall confront you, should you marry a man who is not a Catholic. Your non-Catholic friend believes in divorce. When he tells you the contrary, he tells you what is untrue. Should you become his wife, he shall put you away and get another, just as soon as the marriage contract becomes uncongenial. Freedom to divorce one's lawful wife and to marry another has been sound Protestant doctrine from the beginning. On this subject let me quote for you the Reverend Dr. Morgan Dix, Rector of Trinity Church (Episcopal), New York City. In lectures on the "Calling of a Christian Woman," he says, in reference to the origin, cause and result of the divorce evil: "This is not only a sign of an infidel society; it is also an upgrowth from the principles which form the evil side of Protestantism. There can be no doubt as to the genesis of this abomination. I quote the language of the Bishop (Protestant) of Maine: "Laxity of opinion and teaching on the sacredness of the marriage bond and on the question of divorce originated among the Protestants of Continental Europe in the sixteenth century. It soon began to appear in the legislation of Protestant states on that continent, and nearly at the same time to affect the laws of New England. And from that time to the present it has proceeded from one degree to another in this country, until, especially in New England, and in States more directly affected by New England opinions and usages, the Christian conception of the nature and obligations of the marriage bond finds scarcely any recognition in legislation, or, as must thence, be inferred, in the prevailing sentiment of the community. This is a heresy, born and bred out of free thought as applied to religion; it is the outcome of the habit of interpreting

the Bible according to a man's private judgment rejecting ecclesiastical authority and Catholic tradition, and asserting our freedom to believe what we choose, and to select what religion pleases us best." I repeat young woman, if your non-Catholic intended tells you that he does not believe in divorce, he is not telling the truth. Should you become his wife, you may be certain that just as soon as the marriage contract becomes a burden to him, or association with you uncongenial to him, he will have recourse to the courts of the land to sever that union which God decrees should last until death parts you. This will not be the worst of your misfortune, should it happen, for in a short time you will marry again, giving up your God and His Church, to enter upon a life of sin. Do not scoff, young woman, at this prediction, for the teaching of experience justifies it. Statistics prove that in the majority of cases divorce is followed by another marriage even amongst Catholics, and also that a great percentage of the unfortunate creatures of the underworld are divorced women.

In concluding let me caution you, young women, against blundering, as so many of your sex have done, in the choice of him who is to be your partner throughout life. Bear in mind that in every Mixed Marriage there is more or less interference with his non-Catholic wife in the discharge of the duties of religion, on the part of the non-Catholic husband, despite the promises which he had made, before marriage. Do not imagine, young woman, that your non-Catholic intended will be, after marriage, any exception to the general run of men. It is not rash to presume that he will turn out to be, as your husband, just what others before him have become, and that you in consequence are doomed to be numbered with the many who because they turned deaf ears to the teachings of their Church and became parties to a marriage which she condemns, lived to regret a mistake which is irremediable.

MIXED MARRIAGES

(Fifth Sermon)

CHILDREN LOST TO THE CHURCH

THIS evening, my brethren, we are to consider the evil consequences of Mixed Marriages as we see them in many of the children that spring from these unions. It is indisputable that a great percentage of those, who in this country, fall away from our Church, can trace their defection to these unholy alliances. That such, in many cases, is the result of these marriages is not surprising. On the contrary it would be strange indeed, were it otherwise. You all know how difficult it is, even under the most favorable circumstances, to raise in a land like ours children who in after life will prove to be devout, zealous members of God's Church. You know what combination of forces must be constantly at work in order to counteract in our midst the many evil influences, which at all times and everywhere war upon what is good and holy. It is required, first of all, that both parents be not only Catholics, but dutiful members of their Church. If the stock from which a child takes its origin be bad and ungodly, it is unreasonable to expect very much from him. These good Catholic parents must train their children, even from their tenderest years, to regard an eternity with God as the only thing which is worth contending for on earth. Besides good parents and good home-training, the child must be given a sound Christian Education, and be carefully guarded during youth against all evil association. Even with these factors working harmoniously, we sometimes meet with cases in which failure has been the result. In spite of all the precautions of home, of school and

of church, little ones have gone astray. If this happens under conditions which are favorable, it is like tempting God to expect good, devout children from a home where husband and wife are not agreed on the all-important question of religion. This is the subject to which I wish to call your attention this evening.

It very often happens, as I told you in my last instruction, that the non-Catholic husband does not live up to the promises he made, of not interfering with his wife in the discharge of her religious duties. Before marriage, outside the fact of being an unbeliever, he was, apparently, everything that could be desired in a husband. He had no dislike, he time and again stated, for the faith of her whose hand he sought. He had no objection to her raising any children that might be born to their union, as she wished. He professed to have many Catholic friends and associates; named several priests whom he had met and for whom he entertained great admiration. He had read much about Catholicity, he time and again stated, and was seriously thinking of becoming a Catholic. The Catholic young woman to whom he was paying attention was delighted with him, as were her father and mother and closest friends. Here, they thought, was a case which the Church of God would not have included in her condemnation of all Mixed Marriages, were she conversant with facts. The marriage ceremony had scarcely been performed, when this admirable gentleman, this prospective Catholic, proved to be anything but what he had claimed to be. His wife's faith is detested by him. He is not willing that his children be baptized or raised Catholics. He would not care were his little ones to be reared without religion; allowed to grow up with no knowledge of God, of the soul, or of eternity, but he is determined that no child of his, shall ever be, if he can prevent it, a member of the Catholic Church. She who, against the wishes of her religion had be-

come his wife, finds out when too late that she had made an awful mistake. She dare not have her children baptized. She dare not teach them their prayers or send them to Holy Mass. In some cases she has them stealthily taken to church for baptism. She afterwards does the best she can under adverse circumstances, to teach them the primary truths of Catholic faith, but can accomplish very little. As her children advance in years, she is more and more convinced of her folly in disregarding the wishes of her Church. Constantly at home, her husband ridicules in the hearing of her little ones, the most sacred dogmas of her holy faith. Often do these children hear their father bring argument after argument against their mother's religious belief, which she cannot convincingly answer. The slanders they hear at home against the Catholic Church, are heard repeatedly at school, and make a lasting impression on their youthful minds. They grow to manhood and womanhood and know nothing about their mother's Church. They know nothing, from a Catholic standpoint, of the Priesthood; nothing of Holy Mass; nothing of Jesus dwelling sacramentally in their midst. They have no sooner entered upon an earthly career than sin and unbelief and fierce temptation are everywhere met with. There is no God, no judgment to come, no hell, they are told. They like this teaching. It is far more agreeable than that which they had heard from their mother, and they readily accept it. Henceforth there is nothing in the lives of these creatures which would lead one to suspect that a Catholic woman had given them birth. Thus it happens, my brethren, that in the midst of the infidels and agnostics of our day; in the councils of those who have banded together for the purpose of waging war on society and on all religion; in the ranks of those organizations whose avowed object is the destruction of God's Church, you will find many children of Mixed Marriages.

Should the husband keep his promise of not interfering with his wife in raising her little ones Catholic, there is still very much to cause uneasiness to a zealous mother. Before long she must realize how onerous are the duties which she has assumed. Without any assistance, even a word of encouragement, from her unbelieving husband, it devolves on her to prepare her children for eternity. Their salvation is attached to her salvation. No matter how numerous or how pressing may be the other affairs which demand her attention, the eternal welfare of her children is the first, the most important of all her duties. She must teach her little ones their prayers, kneeling with them each night and morning, to assure herself that this duty is not neglected by them. If her children do not attend a Catholic School—which is almost invariably the case in Mixed Marriages—the greater part of their early religious training must be given by her. We know how incompetent to teach most mothers are, even of those who have the necessary time and patience. We know too how few are the mothers, even amongst those whose husbands are Catholics, who in any way concern themselves with the spiritual training of their children. For the great majority of mothers, with Catholic husbands, whose children attend the Public Schools we ask too much in requiring that they set aside each week, some time during which their little ones will prepare their Catechism lesson for the following Sunday. This lesson which teaches the child about God and His love and his own destiny should be regarded as the most important of the whole week. Yet it is seldom so considered, and is generally neglected. If this be true when both parents are Catholics, it can hardly be expected that the Catholic mother will accomplish much in preparing her children for eternity, in the midst of the difficulties and obstacles which will surround her in a Mixed Marriage.

The Catholic wife of an unbelieving husband in teaching

her little ones the truths of religion, sometimes finds that her children are not inclined to accept the doctrines of Holy Church or to practice the duties which she enjoins. The bent of their minds is towards unbelief; the craving of their hearts is for what is depraved. They are the worthy offspring of an unbelieving and licentious sire. The mother herself may be a model of virtue, the descendant of a long line of saintly ancestors. She may give her children good example, good counsel and pray for them, but all will be in vain. A life of sorrow will be before her, all the bitterer because she entered wedlock against the prohibition and without the blessing of her Church. She has no right to complain if her children prove to be counterparts of him whom she took to her bosom. The example likewise of her unbelieving husband in rejecting religion, cannot but influence his children, especially his sons. The daughters are not in such danger of losing faith, since they are more or less under the example and control of the mother. With the boys, however, it is different, especially if the father be a good man, in the world's judgment, and highly esteemed in the community. You, no doubt, have heard more than one young man argue: "My father is not a Catholic, yet a better man than he does not live. He never gives religion a thought. He does not see the need of Prayer, Confession, Holy Communion, Fasting, Attendance at Mass, and why should I? It would not be possible for me to be better than my father, even were I to perform all the duties prescribed by the Catholic Church. My mother, it is true, is most exact in obeying every precept of her religion, and is anxious that I, too, be a faithful Catholic, but then, my father knows more in a minute than my mother knows in a life time. In following him I do not fear going wrong. Besides the religious duties which my mother and her Church insist on, are bothersome. It is not easy to pray frequently and fervently; to fast and to abstain. It is not agreeable to go

to confession and acknowledge with deep sorrow of soul all one's offenses against God's laws, with a firm determination of sinning no more. I'd much prefer to believe with my father and to model my life after his." Such thoughts as these have led many a young man away from our Church.

The non-Catholic husband and father often interferes with his Catholic wife in the discharge of her religious duties, by making it hard or perhaps impossible for her to observe them. With this unbeliever, the concerns of eternity are not regarded. To him, business, worldly prosperity, is the only matter which deserves a creature's attention. In pursuit of this, everything else is secondary, and all must be sacrificed which stands in the way of its attainment. He will not surrender his business interests for the sake of being near a Church that his wife and children may attend to their soul's interest, which in the estimation of Catholics is the one, and only, really important affair of life. They may be forced to dwell for years in a place where there is no church, and where opportunities of hearing Mass and of approaching the Sacraments are not to be had. What will be the result? What has been the result in innumerable cases we know of? The result has been in many instances the total extinction of Catholic faith, in the souls of both mothers and children. The danger of conditions such as those I have mentioned is so generally recognized, that good Catholic parents before locating in a new district are careful to inquire about the location of Church and School. Should they learn that there is neither Catholic Church nor Catholic school in the settlement where they contemplated locating, they look about for another neighborhood where the faith of their little ones will not be placed in jeopardy. These are matters which do not appeal to a non-Catholic father. As a consequence we find all through this country, in outlying districts, whole families with absolutely no religion, whose mothers had been

at one time members of our Church, but who through force of environment lost every particle of faith. It is not surprising, my brethren, that the number of perversions from the Catholic Church which can be traced directly or indirectly to Mixed Marriages is something appalling. It is claimed by reliable authority that ninety per cent of the children from these unions fall away. A few years ago in Chicago, the Young Men's Christian Association, made a canvass in co-operation with the Federal Census Bureau, and as a result learned that in families in which both parents are Catholics eight per cent of the young men do not attend church, whilst in families in which only one parent is Catholic sixty-six per cent of the young men are not church members. In other words from Catholic families of these United States only eight young men of every hundred are lost to the Church. In families of Mixed Marriages, however, sixty-six in every one hundred men fall away from the faith, or in other words, two-thirds of the young men who have one parent who is a non-Catholic are to be found amidst the ranks of the unbelieving millions of our country.

Each Catholic young woman who decides on taking chances in a Mixed Marriage, despite the warnings of her Church and in face of the awful consequences which she knows to be, in many cases, the result of such unions, assures herself that *her marriage* will be an exception to all other Mixed Marriages. She cannot be made to believe, because she does not wish to believe it, that her intended will prove unfaithful to his promises. However, even should he violate every pledge he makes her, she will raise her children devout Catholics, she declares, despite his opposition. You need not be reminded, my brethren, how often such plans of a good Catholic wife and mother are frustrated. She counts, amongst other things, on years which are to be denied her. She takes it for granted that she shall be spared to direct and

protect her little ones until they have grown to manhood and to womanhood. Death comes to her, however, after a few years of married life. He comes to her like a thief in the night, when least expected. Suddenly, she is aware of his approach, realizes that all shall soon be over. She wants to make her peace with God, and to die with all the consolations of her holy faith. She asks that a priest be sent for to administer the last sacraments. Her husband refuses her dying request. "No priest shall ever enter this house" replies the *honorable gentleman* who a few years before her solemnly declared that he would never interfere with his wife in the practice of her religion. Because of the objection of her husband, because of sins and practices into which she was forced, she may have given up for a long time, ever since her marriage perhaps, the practice of her religious duties. Now death is at hand and she wishes to die in peace with God, but her unbelieving husband, who had before marriage assured her that he had no dislike for the Catholic Church, was even inclined to become a Catholic, and who promised the priest that he would never interfere with her in the practice of her religious duties, stands between her and her God and declares that the minister of religion shall never darken his door. This is no imaginary case. Many times has it happened in the life of every priest that he has been refused entrance into the home of a non-Catholic whose dying wife is piteously begging for the consolations of her religion. Around her bed her little ones are gathered. How awful, the thoughts which fill the dying mother's soul! How terrible the picture which stares her in the face. She knows that her children will be raised outside the pale of her religion; that before her body is cold they will have been turned over to a Protestant orphanage, to Protestant relatives or friends, or most likely, in a short time to a Protestant stepmother, to be taught to hate that blessed faith in which she would

die. Many a poor mother has with bitter regret closed her eyes in death, realizing the awful fate which surely awaits her children. Had she listened to the advice of her Church, she would not in her dying hour be tortured by the awful dread that a child of hers should become a renegade to the Church of God. Could she live her life over again, how different would be her conduct! Could she with her dying breath advise others, there is no doubt as to what that advice would be.

It is sometimes said by young women who are not willing to be convinced that the Church of God is right in her opposition to Mixed Marriages: "It is better for a Catholic girl to marry a good non-Catholic and take her chances with the future than to marry a bad Catholic who will abuse and neglect her and their little ones." This argument has no merit; not even the merit of being honest. It is astonishing, my brethren, how unreasonable creatures can become when they wish to bolster up a bad case. There is no need of any girl marrying a man who will abuse her. She is a fool, who does so. Should she despair of finding one of her own faith who is worthy of her heart and hand, under no circumstance is she justified in becoming the wife of one who is not a member of her Church. Marrying a bad Catholic is at any time preferable to entering holy wedlock with an unbeliever. It often happens that a sensible and good wife, by word and by example, succeeds in bringing back to the fold of Christ an indifferent husband. Even though he should continue to neglect his religion, he will not prevent his children from being raised Catholics. Should his wife be called away before him she need have no fear in her dying hour that her little ones shall be turned over to Protestant orphanages or to persons who will raise them outside the Church. There will be also an added consolation to the dying mother to know that even should her husband be incapable of taking care of her little

ones, God's Church will look after them. The young woman on the other hand who marries a non-Catholic, should she die whilst her children are young, closes her eyes with the terrible fear that a time is to come when her little ones shall scoff at what she holds so dear ; ridicule Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, hate the Mother of God, and Christ's Priesthood and laugh at Holy Mass and all the other devotions of her Church. This is what has happened and is happening in the case of many children who had been baptized Catholics and on the death of their mothers were put under non-Catholic influences. The Protestant Orphanages of the country have a large percentage of children born from Mixed Marriages, who probably would have been saved to the Church had not their Catholic mothers been called away in their infancy, leaving them to the care or the neglect of unbelieving fathers. It makes very little difference that the non-Catholic husband be an exceptional man and lives up to every promise he had made his wife before marriage. On her dying bed he may be careful that she should have all the consolations which her holy faith could give her, and promises that her children shall be raised in the Catholic religion. Despite this assurance the dying woman will be fearful lest the worst might happen and she will beg the priest who gives her the last sacraments to have a special care for her little ones, soon to be motherless. She will remind him that her husband though good and kind and well-meaning is not a member of the Church. She will plead with her relatives and with her Catholic friends and neighbors to interest themselves in behalf of her little ones, that they may remain faithful to the teachings of their Church, and closes her eyes in death. The non-Catholic father for a time may make an effort to carry out his dying wife's request, but it is beyond him. He may send his children to a Catholic school, but he cannot give them that loving help, that sympathetic encouragement, that

daily and hourly prompting which should be characteristic of Catholic home-training. He may see that they go to Mass on Sundays and to the sacraments, but he cannot give that help which can come only from example. He cannot kneel beside them at the altar railing bowing his head with theirs in the Presence of Jesus. He may hear them say their prayers, but they catch no spiritual feeling from his utterances or learn as they would from their Catholic mother how a Catholic ought to pray. Between these Catholic children and their non-Catholic father, good man though he may be, an impossible gulf is opened by the very fact that they and he cannot join in family worship; that religion cannot form the subject of conversation at the family table, where the children must refrain from speaking about the many beautiful things which are associated with their holy faith, because their father, they know, at heart regards such things as superstitious and idolatrous. In such an atmosphere it will not be long before the dead mother will be forgotten and the promises which she on her dying bed had exacted both from husband and from little ones, neglected. Her body will hardly be cold before another will be brought in to take her place. The children, whose spiritual welfare gave her so much concern, as she was about to stand before God's Judgment Seat, to give an account of her stewardship, are brought under the influence of a bigoted step-mother to be taught to hate that holy faith in which their mother closed her eyes. This is not, you know, an unheard of case, but on the contrary, one of very frequent occurrence. Millions who have been lost to our Church can trace their defection, to the death, in their tender years, of their Catholic mothers.

In concluding this instruction, my brethren, I would remind any young woman present who is not fully determined never to give her heart and hand to one who is not a member of God's Church, that should she become the wife of a non-

Catholic she runs the risk of meeting with all the misfortunes which I have enumerated this evening. Our Holy Church who is most competent to pass judgment on these unions, because during the past nineteen hundred years she has been a constant witness of the awful inroads they have made on the souls of her children, condemns them. You, young woman, cannot prudently afford to act contrary to her judgment. It is foolish for you to imagine that you will be able to stand where others have fallen; that you will be able to conquer where others have suffered defeat.

MIXED MARRIAGES

(Sixth Sermon)

CAUSES OF MIXED MARRIAGES

IT is beyond question that the Mixed Marriage is the most powerful and most successful of all the agencies which are arrayed, in our country, against the interests of Jesus Christ. Did not your own experience substantiate this statement, the attitude of your Church towards these unions, now and always, should convince you that she regards them as the greatest of all the evil influences with which she must contend in America. In previous instructions we have seen that at all times, and under every circumstance, the Mixed Marriage is objectional; that even in cases where a great deal of the danger which generally threatens wife and children from these unions has been eliminated, there exists an element of uncertainty which is to be feared. All this being true, it is the duty of every one belonging to God's Church to direct his best efforts against Mixed Marriages. To hope for success, however, we must trace the evil to its source. This we will attempt to do this evening. I will ask you to consider with me, for a little while: "The Causes of Mixed Marriages." In handling a subject of such magnitude, it would be utterly impossible in one instruction to enumerate all the causes which contribute in bringing so many of our Catholic young women to that state of mind which will allow them to become parties to Mixed Marriages, despite the warnings of their Church, the sad experience of others around them and the awful consequences which they know may come to them and to their children. There are many

of these causes. For obvious reasons I must content myself with calling your attention to but a few of them.

The principal of all the causes which lead to Mixed Marriages is the lack of a lively faith in the souls of some of our Catholics. That there are many belonging to our Church in this country who may be classified as indifferent and lukewarm, is beyond question. They had been baptized in the Church, and in a great measure, they accept her teachings and observe her precepts. There is, however, a limit beyond which the Church in dealing with them must not go. Whilst she does not oppose their wishes, they give her allegiance. Let her attempt to coerce them in matters in which they would not have her interfere, and soon they give evidence that their faith is superficial. This spirit pervades the atmosphere of every land in which Protestantism has gained a foothold. It is the result of the principle of private judgment put forward by Martin Luther, to justify his revolt against the authority claimed by the Catholic Church. The surest consequence of this principle is the undermining of faith in the supernatural, and the weakening of supernatural motives of action. It has made of this land a nation of unbelievers. Only the odd man amongst us, is attached to any of the Protestant churches. These are facts which no one can deny. Protestantism in these United States is dead. The fundamental principle upon which Luther built his church, has not only brought about her destruction, but it has also brought religious indifference into the souls of many who claim to be members of the Catholic Church. They have found it impossible to escape inoculation from the virus which pervades America's free air. The School System of our country is also calculated to make religion a matter of only secondary importance. In our Public Schools the Catholic child is in no way prepared for eternity. He is fitted, we will grant, for the world, for business, for amassing

wealth, in fact for everything which man appreciates, excepting the one thing necessary. Whilst giving up the greater part of the week to secular learning, a small portion of it—a few minutes on Sunday morning—may be set aside for the child's eternal interests, hearing Holy Mass and perhaps attending Sunday School. What the outcome of this system of training will be is not a question of conjecture. We know what it has done and what it is doing. In the great majority of cases our Catholic young men turn out, at best, to be very indifferent Catholics, if they do not eventually abandon the Church altogether. A larger percentage of the girls, for many reasons, remain in the Church, still the spirit of indifference controls them also. At these schools our Catholic children mingle freely with persons of every shade of religious belief and eventually take partners for life from amongst these associates, without being in any way concerned about God, religion, soul, judgment, eternity. These marriages must be attributed, in most cases, to the absence of deep, lively, Catholic faith, which seldom survives the godless training of our Public Schools. With faith as one's guiding star, one never goes astray. When, however, faith is obscured and weakened, unbelief with all its attendant evils seizes upon the human soul. The Catholic young woman who appreciates her dignity as a member of Christ's Church will sacrifice anything or everything which earth holds dear rather than violate any precept imposed upon her by her holy religion. Guided and controlled by the same Catholic spirit which made the saints not only obedient to the wishes of the Church, but likewise enthusiastic in every affair in which her well being was concerned, she will never permit herself to disregard the will of the Church, endangering thereby her own salvation and the salvation of others yet unborn, by becoming a party to a Mixed Marriage.

Allied to the want of a lively faith, as a cause of Mixed

Marriages, is the absence from the souls of many Catholics of a genuine hatred of heresy. To some, hatred of heresy, appears out of place in a professed follower of the loving Savior. By others it is condemned as unbecoming in our liberal, enlightened age and country. We are often called upon to listen to broad-minded Catholics in an attempt to justify their rejection of what they suppose to be the teaching of their Church, concerning the attitude of her members towards those who differ from them in religious belief. We Catholics, they say, are forced to live in the midst of heretics of every shade of unbelief. We meet these people socially. We have business dealings with them. We find them good neighbors; as charitable, as honorable, as honest as their Catholic fellow citizens. Even in the practice of their erroneous forms of religion, we cannot but admire their seeming sincerity. How can we be asked to hate that, in which we can discover so little that is entitled to condemnation? The fact, my brethren, that these broad-minded Catholics can discover nothing wrong in the religious beliefs of their non-Catholic friends and associates, is no evidence that it does not exist. It is rather a proof that their own consciences are not so sensitive as they should be. Besides, my brethren, it is a mistaken notion for any Catholic to believe that his Church requires him to hate his heretical neighbors. It is the false doctrines to which, consciously or unconsciously, they adhere that you are required to hold in abhorrence. You must bear in mind that antagonism between truth and error is, and must be always the same. It can neither be done away with nor weakened by circumstances. Catholicity cannot cease to be right because some of those who profess it do wrong; nor can heresy cease to be bad and detestable because some naturally good persons adhere to it. It must be admitted that it is sometimes difficult to live up to these principles. Our daily intercourse with persons, professing what

we believe to be false religions, make it no easy matter to entertain an undying hatred of their errors. It is the lack in the souls of some Catholic young women, of this detestation of whatever is false, which accounts for many Mixed Marriages. St. Paul in his letter to Titus, whom he had raised to the episcopacy, gives him these words of advice: "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid; knowing that he, that is such an one is subverted and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgment" (Titus iii. 10). Such is the rule of conduct prescribed by St. Paul for one who was a bishop, and bound by his office to go in search of souls that are astray, with an assurance that sufficient grace will always be given him lest his own salvation should be imperilled by association with unbelievers. The rule of conduct laid down for Titus by the Apostle to the Gentiles must guide Catholics in their dealings with those who differ from them in religious belief. Your own experience, my brethren, assures you, even had St. Paul never written on the subject, that intimate association with heretics and infidels cannot but be harmful for you. St. John, the Disciple of Love, in his Second Epistle wrote: "Whosoever revolteth and continueth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. . . . If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine receive him not into the house nor say to him: God speed you. For he that saith to him: God speed you, communicateth with his wicked works" (2 John i. 9). Do not misunderstand these words, my brethren. They do not command you to hate heretics, backsliders and others who differ from you in religious belief. As a follower of Christ you must love them sincerely and pray God to bless them and to save them. More than this, my brethren, you are not a faithful child of Holy Mother Church, unless you assist your non-Catholic neighbors in time of need. Our Savior in the beautiful and affecting Parable of the Good Samaritan tell us whom we are

to regard as our neighbors agreeably to the true sense and spirit of the Divine law; also what are our duties towards them. He tells us that neighborhood is not cancelled by difference in religious belief. Those to whom Jesus spoke needed to be reminded of this teaching, but not more so than do the Christians of our own time. It is certain that few things, if any, are capable of exercising a more dividing and alienating influence amongst members of the same community than diversity of opinion on matters of religion. This is not Christianity. A religion, according to the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which will see creatures lying on the highroad of life bleeding and helpless and pass them by unheeded, because they worship God at another altar, is but a mockery of the faith which Jesus brought to earth. The duty is imposed on all of you of assisting your non-Catholic neighbors in time of need. You cannot neglect this duty without most grievous sin. Not only are you bound to assist your needy non-Catholic neighbors, but because of conditions which prevail in this country, you cannot avoid social and commercial intercourse with them. It is this that endangers Catholic faith, brings about religious indifference in the souls of so many of our people and leads them into Mixed Marriages.

Another of the causes which bring about Mixed Marriages to which I will call your attention is the *sense of dependence* which many young women feel. No man, unless incapacitated by age or sickness, ever questions his ability to get along in the world. With woman, however, it is different. She is not, as a rule, so independent as a man is. There are not so many avenues open for her labor or her talents. It was not many years ago that there were but three employments open to woman. She could sew or teach or become a domestic. She was forbidden by a false, foolish and squeamish notion to engage in any other calling than one of

these three—generally approved as best suited for her. Beyond these callings there was no place for woman in the ranks of industry. Her tastes, her talents, her inclinations might have fitted her for something else, but society had decreed it would be unwomanly—masculine—for her to do anything but teaching, sewing or housework. It is true that conditions have changed somewhat in our day for the betterment of woman, still it cannot be said that the female has yet come into her dues. It is undeniable that for the same work she is still paid much less than her brother is, although she may do it as well or better. So, whilst it is true that the employments now open to woman are far more numerous than they once were, she still suffers under economic conditions as men do not. Because there are comparatively few things which woman can do to earn a living; because further, even in these occupations she must encounter the opposition of prejudice, fanaticism and conservatism she is dragooned into matrimony; she marries for a home and a living. Many Mixed Marriages are thus accounted for. The young woman sees before her a life of drudgery and in preference she gives her hand in marriage to one she does not really love, because it will better her conditions. This is a sad state of affairs. It shows anything but a high, civilized Catholic conception of the married state. The woman who marries simply to improve her lot in life, enters upon a state of legalized adultery. The motive which prompts her to give her hand in marriage will justify the life lived by the degraded woman. A marriage which is brought about by the sheer force of economic necessity, or by any other motive except that of mutual love is abnormal and unholy and absolutely impure; it is not made in heaven, but in hell.

Many Mixed Marriages can be traced to the neglect of Catholic mothers. In some cases these mothers themselves had married non-Catholics. It is not strange if their daugh-

ters should do likewise. Statistics prove that children born of Mixed Marriages, marry non-Catholics in two cases out of three. This is accounted for by the force of example; by the fact that children of Mixed Marriages are generally sent to the public schools, and are on this account more apt to be thrown into association with persons having a different religious belief, than are children who attend parochial schools and whose parents are both Catholics. Again, it often happens mothers are careless in guarding their daughters against association with men who are not members of their Church. A young woman perhaps is employed during the day in one of the shops, stores, offices or factories of our city, where she meets gentlemen of all shades of religious belief. Here, a real danger confronts this Catholic girl. If she has been prepared to meet it by a thorough, religious training and by the warnings of a pious, prudent mother, there is hope that she may escape. For those girls, however, who know little or nothing about the teachings of their Church; who at home are haughty, stubborn, disobedient and pay no heed to the advice of parents; who are remiss in the discharge of their religious duties, and care for nothing but clothes, dances and auto rides, because these things, they imagine, heighten their prospects of getting a husband, there is no question but that constant association with unbelievers will lead to Mixed Marriages. One might as well go out to the beach and command the waves of the Pacific to cease encroaching on the shore, in the hope of being obeyed, as to think of changing the mind of an indifferent, indevout, and badly instructed young woman, once it has been set on matrimony. She is determined on marrying should she get the chance. It matters not to her, that she becomes the wife of a non-Catholic.

Often the Catholic mother is responsible for a Mixed Marriage in not only permitting, but in encouraging visits

to her home of a gentleman—matrimonially inclined—who has no religion. It does the mother's soul good to know that her daughter has admirers amongst the opposite sex. It adds years to her life to think of the many girls in the neighborhood who have no gentleman callers. She chuckles with glee as she pictures the mothers nearby, peaking out from behind curtains, their eyes snapping with jealousy and envy as her daughter's suitor stands at the door. At heart, the old lady may not be over anxious about the marriage of her daughter to this non-Catholic gentleman. In some cases she may be opposed to it and warn her daughter that whilst she may welcome this suitor to her home, and go out with him, marriage to him, is out of question. A time comes, however, when all her entreaties, lamentations, weepings and threats will avail nothing. The fact that he who seeks her daughter's hand in matrimony is a non-Catholic, in many cases, raises no objection to him on the part of the mother. On the contrary, it often makes him the more welcome. Neither are his habits thought of, as a matter for investigation. It is astonishing how indifferent people are to the moral standing of the male portion of the human race. Let a young woman make a mistake and no amount of atonement can restore her to the favor of her sex. In the case of a man, however, there are some mothers who never think of considering his notoriously immoral life when there is question of giving him the hand of a daughter in marriage. Of course, such mothers as these are not true Catholic women. It is regrettable that they are so numerous. To them can be traced many a Mixed Marriage which has proved disastrous for all concerned.

We find another cause of Mixed Marriages, in the dread which many young women have of becoming "Old Maids." This is the lash that has driven many of them into those unions which their Church condemns. They consider the

term "Old Maid" as the quintessence of reproach, indicating that one is so unlovely and so unattractive that every man has passed her by. It is because women cannot endure this badge of disgrace—as some of them regard it—that so many of them accept the first offer of marriage made them, without any thought of the religious belief of him to whom they are to be joined in wedlock; without making any investigation concerning his standing in the community, and without considering whether alliance with him will make them better and happier on earth and bring heaven nearer at death. Many of these women, at heart, would a thousand times prefer to remain single. They know that walking the path of life alone is a dream of bliss compared to doing the lockstep down it with an uncongenial companion. The masculine sex never appeals to them but as repulsive and badly in need of reformation. They regard man's sense of importance as ridiculous; his conceit as laughable. They take a look around amongst their married lady friends and observe that the desirable husband is seldom met with. They hear from many wives that their lives are unhappy; that they must sit, as it were, at the feet of a dull, pompous egotist and ply him with a double distilled brand of flattery in order to keep him in good humor. Yet in spite of all they have seen and heard, just to escape the odium of a word, innumerable Catholic women sacrifice themselves on the bridal altar, some of them becoming parties to Mixed Marriages. There are other Catholic women, wives of non-Catholic husbands, who in their young days never doubted but that at some time—not very remote—they would be asked to become some one's wife. So sure were they that their hopes would be realized that they assumed an attitude of independence towards all gentlemen whom they chanced to meet. They would not think of marrying men of their own level. Neither did it occur to them to marry for eternity. They thought only of

wealth and social standing. The desired one, for whom they waited and prayed, never came their way. In the meantime, whilst they were letting good chances slip by, hoping for better, time sped on; year followed year; wrinkles began to mar their features; silver threads put in an appearance, and a day eventually came when these women were prepared to marry at a disadvantage. Here we have, my brethren, the explanation for many Mixed Marriages.

I have aimed in this instruction to account for the fact that so many of our young women disregard the wishes of their Church by entering into the holy state of matrimony with non-Catholics. Of the causes which I have enumerated and briefly commented upon the most potential is the careless Catholic mother. That there are many such is beyond question. In some cases the mother herself has been a party to a Mixed Marriage. It is not surprising that her daughter should do likewise. The mother also neglects to warn her young girl of the awful consequences which almost invariably result from these forbidden unions. She is not careful to guard her against association with men who would not make desirable husbands. She allows her daughters to accept a position that is positively dangerous; to receive into her home gentlemen matrimonially inclined who have no religion; to spend her evenings at theater or elsewhere in the company of one of them, or to go hiking or auto riding with him. When we consider the temptations into which foolish young women are allowed to run by the neglect of careless mothers, we are not surprised that so many of them go wrong. How much better would be conditions in the world and in the Church of God, if Catholic mothers faithfully fulfilled the duties they assumed when they entered the married state!

MIXED MARRIAGES

(Seventh Sermon)

CONVERSIONS

THE words of Our Savior addressed directly to the Apostles: "Go ye forth and teach all nations" have a meaning for all who claim to be the followers of the Savior. Each one of them must contribute his share in the furtherance of those interests for which Christ's Church was organized and commissioned. The will of the Redeemer, that everyone participate in the merits of His Precious Blood, must be seconded by all who belong to Him. He deceives himself who imagines that he is truly a follower of the Good Shepherd who is indifferent about the spiritual welfare of those who are outside His Sheepfold. These statements are accepted, at least theoretically, by every Catholic. We often meet a young woman contemplating matrimony with a non-Catholic, who justifies her conduct in disregarding the wishes of her religion, on the plea that she intends, after marriage, by every means within her power, to bring about the conversion of her unbelieving spouse. For doing this, she contends, she should be commended, not censured. Whether or not the possibility of bringing an unbeliever into the Church, justifies a Catholic young woman in taking a chance in a Mixed Marriage is the question we are to consider this evening.

Let us first, my brethren, consider those conversions which precede marriage, and are the result of a Catholic young woman's opposition to marrying one who is not a member of her Church and of her precaution to guard her-

self and her children against the misfortunes which often follow Mixed Marriages. Her demand that he who seeks her hand in wedlock, become a Catholic before she will consent to become his wife, is the result of a faulty idea concerning the virtue of faith. To her mind, apparently, conversion from unbelief is a purely rational or human process. This is a mistaken notion. The virtue of faith, on the part of God, is in every sense gratuitous, and, on the part of the creature, unmerited, that is to say, it is not given to one as a reward for anything he may have done, but proceeds solely from the bounty of the Creator. Neither does faith come to one as the result of a conviction which arises within his mind. He may, perhaps, have become convinced as the result of his investigations that the dogmas taught by the Catholic Church have been revealed from on high and therefore should receive the assent of his mind, yet with all the strivings of his free will, he can never become capable of an act of faith, which requires as its indispensable preliminary, the grace of God. These important truths are often forgotten by Catholics. Many of them seem to be under the impression that nothing more is necessary, for the conversion of one outside the Church, or for retaining within the Church those who already belong to her, than instruction appealing solely to the intellect. This false notion seems to be entertained by that Catholic young woman who insists on her intended entering the Church before she will consent to become his wife. She demands this of him as though her will in the matter and his will are all that figure. In some cases the young man submits. He takes a course of instruction and in due time is received into the Church. Often—developments prove—these converts have not a particle of faith. The reception of Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation is regarded by them as nothing more than a form of initiation such as all societies have. Occasionally

we meet with a non-Catholic whose dispositions are good. He sees the reasonableness of Catholic dogma and the absurdity of Protestant claims. He really wishes to believe but cannot. Intellectual conviction is not faith. There are many in the world today who are intellectually convinced that of all churches professing to be the Church of Christ, the Catholic Church alone is logical in her claims and unassailable in her credentials, but though admitting this, they do not, they never will become Catholics. God alone can give the faculty of seeing, in the order of grace, as He alone can give it in the order of nature and until He gives it, no man can attain to it by any process of scientific inference. Experience leads us to question the genuineness of some of the conversions that are brought about before marriage. In many cases these converts lose the faith after marriage, if they ever had it. Let me relate for you an incident which came under my own notice. It will show how uncertain some of these conversions are. A certain young woman, well-known to me, was sought in marriage by a young man, a Lutheran. His family were all strict church members. The Catholic girl was well instructed in her religion and would not think of marrying one who was not a member of her Church. She rejected the young man's proposal. With no solicitation on her part, he made up his mind to become a Catholic. He underwent instruction and in the course of time was received into the Church. Their marriage soon followed his conversion. During their married life nothing was ever said or done to mar the happiness that was constantly beneath their roof. How little, however, do creatures know of things which the future holds in store for them, to turn the current of their lives. The good woman of whom I am speaking, after ten years of happy, wedded life was called away by death, leaving behind five little children, the eldest of whom was nine years of age. Her body was hardly cold before

her husband had abandoned the Catholic Church, and her little ones had been taken in charge by a bigoted grandmother. Those children are now men and women and are all fathers and mothers of Protestant families. This is no imaginary case. All concerned to it are well known to me. Neither is it an extraordinary case. There perhaps is no one listening to me who cannot tell of others, similar to it, which have come under his own notice. The moral, young woman, is: It is not safe to take a chance with one who would come into the Church to make you his wife.

Our Holy Church is anxious about the eternal welfare of the non-Catholic who becomes the husband of a Catholic wife. One of the promises exacted of the Catholic woman at the time a dispensation is granted her to marry one who is not of her religious faith, is that she will do everything possible to bring about his conversion. You need not be told, my brethren, that the hopes of the Church are seldom realized, because, for one reason, the Catholic wife does not live up to the promises she made. In many cases her own faith is not what it should be. Were we to examine into her life, previous to marriage, we would not find that she was a real, devout, zealous member of God's Church. We would find that she had no love for home; that her evenings were never spent there; that she was not contented except when on the street, at the theater, in the dance hall or auto riding, and that she strove above all things else to keep up with the fashions. When she has become the wife of one who differs from her in religious belief, it is not to be supposed that she shall be suddenly transformed into another St. Monica. Her association with a non-Catholic husband is not calculated to make her more devout in the practice of her religious duties; more zealous about God's glory; more concerned in the interests of His Church and more anxious to bring unbelievers into the fold of Christ. It is not at all surprising that even

though she promised solemnly, before marriage, to do all in her power to reclaim her husband from his errors, she neglects this duty. Instead of accomplishing all which her Church had hoped for, in permitting her to be a party to a Mixed Marriage, she rather confirms her husband in his opposition to her religion by neglecting the practice of the most sacred duties and by being all that a good wife and mother should not be. The good wife recognizes as her first duty, that of obeying her husband. He is the head of the family and she owes him obedience wherever it can reasonably be required. Speaking with divine inspiration, St. Paul says: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as it behoveth in the Lord" (Col. iii. 18). Eve was not formed from Adam's head, to be his ruler, but from his side, because the wife's vocation is to obey; to carry out her husband's orders willingly and loyally. We occasionally meet with a Catholic woman, the wife of a non-Catholic, who scoffs at the teaching of St. Paul; calls the Apostle an old fogey, way behind the times. No husband will ever boss her, she declares, and means it. She is determined on having her own way at any cost. Her undisciplined temper; her habit of constantly grumbling and complaining make life miserable for all about her. Amongst strangers she can measure her words and control her temper. Amidst the impenetrable secrecy of the family circle however, the mask is thrown off and this woman, who can be, when away from home, sweet, charming, and thoughtful, is a brawling, disobedient wife and a scolding, fault finding, disagreeable mother. To her non-Catholic husband it is evident that she neglects the spiritual training of her children. In her own private life, no deep, genuine piety is to be seen. She may go to Mass on Sundays and receive Holy Communion once or twice in the year. She is not, however, to be classed with women who are truly devout. Never does she pay a visit to Jesus in the tabernacle. Never can she be

seen with her children at evening devotions of the Church. Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament is habitually neglected by her and by them. It is not surprising that instead of bringing her non-Catholic husband into the Church, she rather turns him away. He cannot but conclude that if she be a sample of Catholic virtue, he wants nothing more of Catholicity. Many a well-disposed, non-Catholic husband is kept out of the Catholic Church by an indifferent Catholic wife. The enormity of her sin cannot be questioned. We are taught that it is one of the most meritorious of employments on earth to be allowed to cooperate with Christ in bringing unbelievers into the Church. They who zealously apply themselves to this heavenly function are called in Sacred Scripture, Men of God, Angels of God, Apostles, Ambassadors and Ministers of Jesus Christ. On the other hand alliance with satan in effecting the spiritual ruin of souls is the most diabolical of employments in which a creature can be engaged. They who are occupied in this devilish work are nothing less than emissaries of hell, agents, deputies and co-adjutors of the evil one. To this latter class belong those Catholic wives who by their pagan lives bring unjust aspersions on the faith which they profess and hinder the conversion of well-disposed husbands.

There is another woman, also wife of a non-Catholic husband, who unlike her whom we have just considered, is faithful to the promise she made God's Church, of doing everything in her power to bring her unbelieving spouse to the faith. She is aware that the Church expects that the family circle where she presides shall become a center from which shall radiate graces and blessings upon all who may come beneath its influence. She realizes that upon her, as wife and mother, has been imposed the duty of making her home all that God intends it should be; that she holds very largely, in her hands, the destiny of souls that may nestle there. We

know from history that in rare emergencies the Almighty has raised up a Debora to save His people, or a St. Joan of Arc to revive the sinking spirits of desponding patriots, but nevertheless, to the vast majority of women, He has dedicated the home and the fireside as their appropriate sphere. The good wife and mother, accepting the office to which God has called her in married state does so realizing that she, in a great measure, shall be held responsible for the salvation, not only of her children, but of her husband as well; that from her maternal heart, guided by natural prudence and inspired by Christian faith, must go forth that dominant influence which shall lift the thoughts and aspirations of her household, beyond the skies to the mansions prepared by Our Heavenly Father for those who love Him. She can hope for such results only by making her home a real Christian Home, that is a home where Jesus is the Center of its hopes, the Author of its laws, and the Model of its virtues. She will first of all model her own life after that of Christ. In everything she does; in everything she says, His example shall be before her. The influence of her own perfect life on her unbelieving husband, as well as on her little children, cannot be overestimated.

The good Catholic wife and mother is also a woman of prayer. The duty of praying has been imposed on all by God Himself. The words of Christ: "Ask and you shall receive" express at the same time a command and a promise. They impose on creatures the obligation of praying to their Creator and at the same time give them an assurance that their requests shall be heard and granted. The good wife and mother prays for the needs of her family. She often begs God to bless her little children; to watch over them; to guide and protect them, so that in the life to come, they shall be happy with Him and His elect throughout eternity. At close of day she gathers her little ones about her for family prayers. No matter how pressing may be the claims of other

affairs on the attention of the household, all before retiring are brought together to adore and to thank God and to ask His blessing, on all of them, but especially on the unbelieving husband and father. It is not sufficient that they give him good example, God's law requires that they pray for his conversion. It is true that the conversion of a soul, like the creation of the world, is the work of God alone. It is also certain that in the ordinary course of His providence, God not only permits, but actually demands the co-operation of creatures before bestowing the gift of faith on unbelievers. All other duties of religion are conscientiously discharged by this good Catholic woman. Each morning, when possible, she hears Holy Mass. Frequently, if not daily, she approaches Holy Communion. No matter how busy she may be, she manages to find a little spare time during the day to visit her Lord, dwelling nearby, in a lonely tabernacle. In her dealings with others—friends, neighbors, strangers—she is always and everywhere the true follower of Him Who says to each of us: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John xiii. 15). Such, my brethren, in a few words, is the true Catholic wife and mother. Such is the ideal woman our Church has in mind when she exacts from her who makes application for a dispensation permitting her to enter the holy state of matrimony with one who is not of the true faith, the promise that after marriage she shall do all in her power to bring about the conversion of her non-Catholic husband. There are such women, my brethren. The home where one of them presides is blessed by her presence, her example, her prayers, as well as by her wise, gentle management of all its domestic affairs. In concluding this point of my instruction let me tell you of a home where a true Catholic wife and mother lived. To ecclesiastical history we are indebted for the facts which I am about to lay before you.

In the beginning of the fourth century there lived in northern Africa a devout Catholic woman, the wife of an unbelieving husband and the mother of a wayward son. The husband was an irritable, sensual man. Bursts of violent passion were almost constant with him. To these his wife opposed an angelic meekness which often made him ashamed of his conduct. For years she bore patiently with his harsh treatment. Her highest aim was to win him over to the faith, by her own good example, her conscientious discharge of her household duties, and by her constant petitions to her Heavenly Father in his behalf. Every morning this wife attended Holy Mass. Each evening found her kneeling before the tabernacle of her Lord, humbly begging Him to enlighten the mind of her pagan husband, and of her wayward son. She had the happiness of seeing her prayers answered. One year before her husband's death he was received into the Church and died in the love of his Maker. Her wayward boy, however, long continued to be a source of anxiety for the heart-broken mother. Although she had faithfully watched over him in his tender years and sought both by precept and by example to overcome in him the evil effects of her husband's sinful life, her efforts were unavailing. Her son had also inherited strong sensual passion from his father and spurned the efforts of his holy mother to bring about his conversion. Unable however to withstand her tears and entreaties, he went away from his native land, that undisturbed by his mother's presence and pleadings, he might glut to their full all the evil propensities of his baser nature. The mother followed him over the seas from Carthage to Rome and then on to Milan, never ceasing her prayers. At Milan she called on the Archbishop, St. Ambrose, and begged him to plead with her boy. The saint gave her the comforting assurance: "A child of such prayers and tears shall never be lost." Day after day and night after night, during thirty years, prayers

which did violence to heaven by their fervor, faith and persistence, constantly ascended to the throne of God in behalf of her sinful boy. At no time did she murmur against God or lose hope. At last, a short time before her death, her prayers were granted. This faithful wife and mother was St. Monica. This wayward son was St. Augustine.

In some cases, my brethren, the desires of Holy Church in permitting a Mixed Marriage are realized. Through the devout life and the fervent prayers of his Catholic wife the conversion of an unbelieving husband is brought about. Often, however, it is not until towards the end of his days that he comes into the Church. His wife may flatter herself that she has gained a soul for heaven. She never thinks of the souls she has lost. The years of indifference and of worldliness lived by her husband before he finally embraced the faith had borne fruit in a number of godless sons. It cannot be denied that in the majority of cases, the sons of non-Catholic fathers and of Catholic mothers have no religion. I reminded you in a previous instruction that a few years ago in Chicago, the Young Men's Christian Association, made a canvass in cooperation with the Federal Census Bureau, and as a result of their investigation discovered that in families where both parents are Catholics, eight per cent of the young belonging to these families are not church members. They found out also that in families where only one parent is a Catholic, sixty-six per cent of the young men abandon the Catholic Church. In other words, from Catholic families of our country, only eight out of every hundred boys forsake their religion. In families of Mixed Marriages, however, sixty-six in every hundred of our young men fall away from the faith. There is no reason for a Catholic wife and mother to congratulate herself because her husband in his latter days has been brought into the Church, if she sees about her a number of unbelieving sons.

It generally happens, my brethren, that even in cases where the Catholic wife faithfully lives up to the promises she made the Church, before marriage, that her efforts to bring about her husband's conversion, are unsuccessful because they are counteracted by his indifference to everything that is eternal and spiritual. He cannot bear even the thought of death or of judgment. Any reference to such disagreeable subjects is resented by him. Sometimes, perhaps in the hearing of his children he ridicules his wife's belief that God will punish eternally those who disobey His holy law. He does not hesitate to proclaim his own conviction that there are matters of more vital importance to a creature, than his destiny after death. Even should he be disposed to give his wife's religion serious thought, he is so occupied with his worldly interests, that he can consider nothing else. He dies just as he had lived. Imagine the anguish of his Catholic wife as she watches by his dying bed. She smooths the pillows that he may be comfortable. She wipes the boiling perspiration from his brow; listens with breaking heart to his labored breathing which tells her how close to the dread judgment seat is the loved partner of her life. He is quickly passing away. Soon nothing will be left her save the lifeless clay which a few brief hours will see consigned to the grave. And what of his immortal soul? Can she bid him farewell buoyed up by Christian hope? Can she say: "Good-bye, loved one. You have fought the good fight. You have kept the faith. Soon we shall be together in heaven, to part no more?" No, my brethren, she cannot bring herself to this conviction. Her dying husband had lived in her society for years. He had seen her kneeling each night and morning in prayer. He had seen her go to Mass and had learned to know the days of her Holy Communion. Maybe he had at times taken up and perused a Catholic prayer-book or read a Catholic paper or a work written in

defense of Catholic truth. Often had his wife explained Catholic dogmas in the hope that his eyes might be opened. All this occurs to her now, as she kneels beside his bed. It occurs to her also that under the conditions in which he had lived with her it would not be possible for him to now be in such a state of ignorance of the true faith as will excuse him before God. How unlikely that it never once entered his mind that perhaps the Catholic religion is the true religion and that he should inquire into its claims on his allegiance. She knows too, of many things in his life which must have offended God. She remembers some of his sins and may have reason to believe that others, still more grievous disfigure his soul, and he is dying without any sign of repentance; dying as a brute—no prayer on his lips, no sign of sorrow, no thought of God, caring only to be relieved of the agony that is on him. At last all is over. His soul has passed away and stands before the great Judge, whilst the poor wife weeps by the bedside on which his lifeless corpse lies, her heart broken with grief and anguish. Imagine the dreadful sorrow, the almost utter despair which this good woman experiences when obliged to witness her beloved partner dying out of the Church of God, to be buried without Catholic rites and his name never to be mentioned at the holy altar. Before marriage she had promised to do all in her power by prayer, by precept and by example to bring about his conversion, and yet he died an unbeliever. Her sorrow is fearful to contemplate. It is so saddening, so hopelessly, wretchedly miserable as to deter any Catholic young woman, one would imagine, from ever allowing her affections to be centered on anyone who is not a child of Holy Mother Church.

In this discourse, my friends, I have sought to answer that young woman who would justify her contemplated marriage to one outside the Church, by promising herself that she will bring about the conversion of this young man, either

before she has become his wife, or after. I have reminded you that these conversions seldom take place; that as a general rule the non-Catholic dies as he had lived. I have told you also that for one who is brought into the Church as a result of a Catholic wife, one thousand forsake the Church and incur damnation; that in consequence of such defection, until the end of time, souls will continue to be multiplied that will never see God and shall trace their lives of infidelity and estrangement from Him to a Mixed Marriage. Your duty, young woman, is evident. May God give you strength to sacrifice anything on earth, no matter how desirable it may be, rather than enter into a league with satan in damning souls.

MIXED MARRIAGES

(Eighth Sermon)

AN APPEAL TO THE JURY

WE are about to conclude our course of sermons on Mixed Marriages. In the introductory discourse, I gave as a reason for attempting a series of instructions on Mixed Marriages, the fact that the evils which prey upon Church and Society as a result of these forbidden unions, are so awful, that no one engaged in the Savior's work should hesitate in doing his utmost against them. I have endeavored to present these evils to you, my brethren, as they have impressed me during my years on the mission. I leave it to you to pass judgment on the case I have made out against the greatest culprit which our Church in this country has to deal with.

Throughout this series of sermons I have been anxious to avoid saying anything which might wound the feelings of non-Catholics or of Catholics who have already contracted Mixed Marriages. My arguments were addressed particularly to unmarried Catholic men and women, especially the latter. You all know that it is the Catholic woman rather than the Catholic man who most generally disobeys the precept of the Church forbidding one to enter the state of wedlock with an unbeliever. It is rare indeed, that one of our Catholic young men takes a non-Catholic wife. I aimed also at arousing the Catholic public to a sense of duty towards Mixed Marriages. Experience shows that there is a lamentable indifference or toleration towards these unions on the part of our people, which can be accounted for only by faulty

notions they have of them, and which are the result of the irreligious atmosphere in which they live. Many of our people regard it as a matter of indifference whether one enters matrimony with an unbeliever or with one of his or her own faith. They do not consider that they have done anything wrong in entering into a contract which the Church permits. Hence the apparent duty which confronts those having care of souls, to educate all coming under their influence, on the real sentiments of the Church of God towards these marriages. This duty primarily belongs to the Catholic mother. On her especially does God impose the obligation of doing everything within her power to guard her daughter against the danger of marrying a man who is not a member of her Church. All in a position to know will agree that the Mixed Marriage can generally be traced to a negligent mother. Were mothers to take precautions in time, most Mixed Marriages could be prevented. With their experience in the world, neglect to properly prepare their daughters for the dangers which they must encounter is unexcusable, and positively criminal. They know the low grade of morality that is everywhere about us. They are aware that unchecked communication between young people of different sexes will naturally ripen into an attachment so strong as to resist all efforts to destroy it, and yet some mothers will permit their daughters to associate with unbelievers; to receive them into their homes and to go out with them for an evening's pleasure. When the harm has been done these negligent mothers will claim that they are in no way accountable for it. Their children, however, as well as Almighty God will hold them responsible. There are some foolish mothers who regard wealth as the only thing that is worth considering in him who seeks a daughter's hand. If he has money all his deficiencies, his wicked life, his irreligion are passed over as matters of no consequence. What a reckoning will there be when these

mothers stand before God's judgment seat! Let me tell you of a mother who had a real, God-like love for her children. I refer to the mother of the Machabees, whose history is given us in the Old Testament (2 Mach. vii. 1). This woman and her seven sons lived during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanus, King of Syria, an impious and cruel prince. He undertook to abolish amongst the Jews, the worship of the true God and for this purpose resorted to cruelties seldom equalled by anything recorded in the annals of history. The good woman, whom I have mentioned with the seven sons, was called before the monster and commanded to eat upon the spot and without delay, some meats forbidden by the law of God. On their refusal to obey the king's command, he ordered the sons to be stripped then and there, and to be publicly scourged. When this had been done, the oldest son said to the tyrant: "What wouldst thou ask, or learn of us? We are ready to die rather than to transgress the laws of God, received from our fathers" (2 Mach. vii. 2). This defiance put the ruler in a rage. He commanded that frying pans and broken caldrons be made red hot; that in the presence of his mother and brothers this young man's tongue be cut out; his scalp be torn from his head, and his hands and feet be chopped off. When this had been done, the king ordered him thrown upon a red hot frying pan. It was an awful sight the poor mother was called upon to witness. She could have saved her boy from that terrible death by one word of advice. It was, many of our day would say, a slight offense to violate God's law under such circumstances and in such a trivial way as eating a morsel of forbidden meat. One word from the mother to this effect would have saved her son. This word she would not speak. She was not willing that a child of hers should offend his good God, even, though doing so would save him from torture and from death. The mother and her other sons knew that a

similar fate awaited them. They encouraged one another to die joyfully saying: "The Lord God will look upon the truth and will take pleasure in us." After the death of the oldest son, the one next to him was brought forward and subjected to cruelties such as his brother had suffered. After first tearing off his scalp, they asked him whether he still persisted in disobeying the king's order. He answered: "I will not do it." He was condemned to the same cruel death which his brother had met with. In his last gasp he said to the king: "Thou indeed, O most wicked man, destroyest us out of this present life; but the King of the World, will raise us up, who die for His laws in the resurrection of eternal life." Thus the slaughter went on. The third, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth son—one after another—was brutally tortured and put to death before the mother's eyes. She looked on without emotion. She shed no tear over their cruel fate, lest their constancy might have weakened. In every way she encouraged them to be faithful unto the end. All was not over yet. The last, the youngest son, was still spared her. The tyrant was anxious to have him yield. He promised, with an oath, to make him rich and happy and to number him amongst his bosom friends if he would only obey his command, and eat the meat which the law of his God forbade him to eat. The youth repaid his promises with a just contempt, not condescending to answer them. Antiochus besought the mother to plead with her boy, her only child, and to advise him to obey the king's command that he might be spared to her. The mother agreed to advise him. She exhorted him with all her strength, but differently from what the king intended. Listen, my brethren, to her words: "My son, have pity upon me, that bore thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee and brought thee up unto this age. I beseech thee my son, look upon heaven and earth and all that is in them and con-

sider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also. So thou shalt not fear this tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren." The mother had no sooner finished these words of exhortation than the courageous youth defiantly cried out: "For whom do you stay? I will not obey the commandment of the king, but the commandment of the law, which was given us by Moses." At these words the tyrant was beside himself with rage. The young martyr was tortured even more cruelly than his brothers before him had been, but in spite of all the torments heaped upon him, he preserved to the end the purity of his faith, and confidence in the promises of his God. The mother was left alone but for a short time, in the midst of the lacerated remains of her seven beautiful boys. Her torture and death quickly followed. This touching story, my brethren, is recorded in the pages of Holy Writ. There is nothing extraordinary in the willingness with which this mother and her sons met torture and death rather than offend Almighty God. Every age in the history of the Church has witnessed again and again similar constancy. To souls who truly love God, trials, tortures, death, are at all times preferable to offending Him. We are particularly concerned at the present time in the conduct of the mother of these young men, whose fidelity to God's law we have been considering. The king had ordered her sons under penalty of death to eat of the flesh of swine, forbidden by their religion (Lev. xi. 7). It might have happened that pity for their dear old mother would have caused them to accede to the king's command had she asked this favor of them. She, however, was not only willing, but anxious, that they be tortured before her eyes, rather than disobey God's law. Suppose, my brethren, that the law at issue referred, not to the eating of forbidden meat but to taking unbelievers in mar-

riage, we cannot imagine that saintly woman changing her attitude. We cannot imagine her looking upon a Mixed Marriage as harmless in the face of God's law: "Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son" (Deut. vii. 3). This command is so clear that its meaning has never been questioned. The mother of the Machabees, who encouraged her sons to martyrdom rather than have them offend God, even by a trivial violation of the law, would have been a thousand times more anxious lest they falter were there question of offending Him in that most grievous way of entering the holy state of wedlock with one who is not a member of God's Church. We need in our day and country mothers like the devout, heroic woman, who preferred to see her sons tortured and cruelly put to death, rather than deny their God and sin against His holy law. It was of no consequence in her estimation that riches and the favor of the king should reward her sons for treason to their Heavenly Father. Were mothers of our time controlled by such sentiments, innumerable evils which now afflict the Church of Christ would be scarcely known; the Mixed Marriage, the worst of all these evils would be far less frequent than it now is.

Again, my brethren, the number of Mixed Marriages would be very much reduced if none entered the state of matrimony but those whom Divine Providence had set aside for married life. There is no doubt that numerous women are rushing into marriage whom God never intended for the marriage state. They take husbands not because they are convinced, after careful consideration and fervent prayer, that it is the will of their Creator, they should do so, but solely to better their condition in life. It is not unreasonable to predict that a woman who will marry for a support and a home, will not be particular whether her husband be a Catholic or not. It is then of the highest importance that a

woman, before rushing headlong into matrimony should calmly consider whether or not He Who called her into being, has set her aside for the married state. Our Blessed Savior distinctly teaches that He Who regulates the motions of the heavenly bodies, does not overlook the interests of creatures dwelling upon earth; that He provides not only for the needs of every animal and of each sparrow upon its surface, but is concerned likewise with the destiny and the well-being of every intelligent creature whom He has created. In the order of His Providence, He has assigned to each of these a special mission, a definite work to do. From all eternity He has planned the minutest detail in each one's earthly pilgrimage. Some of you young women were set aside for married life. Others have been called to the Religious State. More of you perhaps, are to live in the world and to remain single. Of these three states, the Religious State is the most perfect, the happiest and the safest. Our Blessed Savior Himself tells us of this sure road to perfection on earth and to life everlasting in the world to come. A rich young man went to Him and ask the all-important question: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may receive life everlasting?" (Mark x. 17.) The Savior answered him: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." To this the young man replied: "All these have I kept from my youth, what is yet wanting to me?" Jesus answered: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give it to the poor . . . and come follow Me" (Matt. xix. 21). Mark, my brethren, that in this last reply, Our Savior refers to attaining perfection, copying more closely His own life, not to the saving of one's soul. No doubt married women can save their souls. The state to which they have been called is an honorable state. In the new law it has been raised to the dignity of a sacrament. The duties imposed on a Christian Mother are as of eminent utility to society and to religion as their fulfillment

is becoming and honorable to herself. It is beyond question, however, that the proper fulfillment of her many duties will leave her little time to range beyond the precincts of her family that she may engage herself in the concerns of others or undertake extraordinary practices of devotion. Her mind is therefore necessarily and properly occupied with the little world by which she is surrounded, in the midst of which she moves, and in the administration of which she holds a most responsible position. It would not be possible for one called to such cares as these to attain that height of sanctity which those set aside for the Religious State are expected to reach. In order that they who hear His invitation: "Come follow Me," may be unencumbered by worldly ties, Jesus requires them as the first step on the road to perfection to abandon home, possessions and dear ones, and He promises them in return a hundred fold on earth and life everlasting in the world to come. "Everyone that hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for My Name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold and shall possess life everlasting" (Matt. xix. 29). From these words we rightly conclude that there is a renunciation of those good things which one may lawfully enjoy; of those ties which one may lawfully contract recommended by Our Divine Teacher, as tending to His glory and as deserving a superabundant recompense in eternity. This is the Religious State, founded in its essence and substance by the Redeemer Himself, and pointed out by Him as the highest, the holiest, the most perfect way. To this life, Jesus calls His chosen ones; those whom He designates as "friends of the Bridegroom." Many in our day, unwilling to make the sacrifice demanded, reject their Savior's invitation: "Come follow Me." We are told in the Gospel that when the young man heard from the lips of Jesus the conditions on which one may attain perfection: "Go sell what thou hast and give to

the poor, and come follow Me" (Matt. xix. 21), "he went away sad; for he had great possessions." Jesus commenting on his conduct said to His disciples: "Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix. 23). Things are to-day as they were at the time Our Savior spoke these words. Wealth and the pleasures of life stand between the creature and the observance of his Master's command: "Go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow Me." There is no doubt that many young women having vocations for the Religious Life, chose instead the married state because they were unwilling to make the sacrifice which Christ demands of them. As married women they are failures. They are unfaithful wives; careless, indifferent mothers and may lose their souls. They might have become saints had they obeyed the voice of God calling them into the sanctuary. Your best interests demand of you, young woman, that before taking upon yourself the responsibilities of married life, you consider carefully, prayerfully and advisedly whether God is not calling you to that life which is best, happiest and safest.

Should one be convinced that she has not been called to the religious state, she would have no right to conclude that God created her to be some one's wife. Many women, convinced that they have no vocation for the religious life, force themselves into the married state where their Creator never intended they should be. He had set them aside to live in the world and to remain single. He made the excess in numbers of women over men to emphasize His decree that some women are intended to be free from the cares of a family, that they may be able to take a more active and independent part in the social and the spiritual regeneration of the community where they reside. Some of these unmarried

women are to be the bread winners of a group of younger brothers and sisters. In other cases an old father or an invalid mother depends on them for the necessities and the comforts of life. They are in reality the ministering angels of the little home circles in which they move. They have become "old maids" if you will, because of the duties which God imposed on them, and which they will not shirk. Let no one cast a slur upon them. Not all of this class of women as I have said accept the duties which Divine Providence has allotted them. Some are in no way concerned, even though the comforts due an old father and mother or younger brother and sisters are dependent almost solely on their labor. Just as soon as an opportunity of getting married presents itself, they disregard the duties which the Creator has imposed on them, to enter a state for which they were never intended. An old father or mother is sent to the Relief Home. In some cases younger brothers and sisters are sent to the Orphan Asylum. Such a young woman as this, who is heedless of God's law requiring her to honor her father and mother and to support and comfort them in their declining years, will not hesitate in disobeying that other law which forbids her entering the state of matrimony with one who is not a member of her Church.

There are other unmarried women whom the Creator has set aside to be His Apostles in the midst of the circles in which they move. They cannot, it is true, receive Holy Orders; offer the Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass or perform those duties which belong exclusively to the Sacred Priesthood. Nevertheless, they are priests of Christ, in the sense that they can offer up to God in the sanctuary of their homes and on the altar of their hearts, the acceptable sacrifice of praise, supplication and thanksgiving, and by example and by precept make their Savior better known and loved amongst their associates. There is no young woman who is

not constantly being brought face to face with opportunities of making others better and happier. These opportunities she may not disregard. It is by no means sufficient for us to shun sin; to be frequent and fervent in the reception of the sacraments; to be serious and religious in our closets, we must be useful too, and take care that as we all reap numberless benefits from society, society may be the better because we have lived. It is a false, a faulty and an indolent humility which makes people sit still and do nothing because they believe they are not capable of doing much. Life is made up of little things. It is but once in an age that occasion is offered for doing a great deed. True greatness consists in being great in little things. The duty of setting good example; of encouraging virtue and religion and of discountenancing vice and folly; of advising, instructing and helping others along the pathways of life; of making some human heart a little wiser, more manly and more virtuous is imposed on all of us but especially on the woman upon whom the Creator has placed no family cares and responsibilities.

I have endeavored, my brethren, throughout the series of sermons on Mixed Marriages which I am now about to bring to a conclusion, to make your duty clear. I have shown you that Mixed Marriages have been forbidden from the beginning; that in the Old Law God forbade His people to intermarry with unbelievers; that the Apostles cautioned their converts against association with heathens; that Popes in every age of the Church and councils both general and particular have forbidden Catholics to be parties to these unions. I have reminded you of facts with which you are all familiar, showing how these marriages result in the weakening of Catholic faith, in religious indifference and often in perversion of both mothers and their children. I have shown you that it is presumptuous on the part of any Catholic mother, to think that she will be able to raise her

little ones to be good faithful members of her Church in spite of the opposition of her unbelieving husband. I have reminded you that the promises made by the non-Catholic party to a Mixed Marriage are seldom lived up to, and that even in the case of the most liberal, most honorable and most gentlemanly husband there is more or less opposition to the religion of his wife. I have told you that a life of uncertainty and misery is before every Catholic mother whose husband is not a member of her own Church. She is aware that she has no hold on life and she has reason to dread the fate which would befall her little ones, should death come to her in their tender years. She knows of other mothers who have been called away, and whose children were raised outside the Church. I now submit the case to your judgment. It may be that there are present some young women who live for no other purpose than having a good time and who will marry the first chance they get and without any regard for consequences. All argument against Mixed Marriages is lost on one of this class. I am confident, however, that the good Catholic young woman who lives for eternity and sees everything by the light of faith must be impressed by the arguments which are brought against marrying one who is not of her own faith. To her, the will of the Church, is the will of her Savior; the voice of the Church is the voice of Christ. There is no danger that she shall ever be a party to a union which her Church condemns. She knows that life is short and that before very long, death will claim her. One brief sentence of Holy Writ shall close the biography of every creature as if in mockery of the unsubstantial pretensions of human pride and human greatness: "And all the days of Mathusala were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died" (Gen. v. 27). A similar sentence awaits all of you. "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. ix. 27). This world is a stage whereon we play different parts, but

death will send all alike to the grave and to judgment. "It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). He Who gave us our being shall call for it again and exact from each of us the offering of a life which had been lived in His light, ruled by His charity and humbly and thankfully resigned when the end had come; a life rescued by repentance and self-discipline from folly and sin; a life in which we sought by His help to become like unto Him Who had given an example which we all must follow. Your chances for eternity, young woman, will not be the brighter, should you, contrary to the wishes of God's Church, become a party to a Mixed Marriage.

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